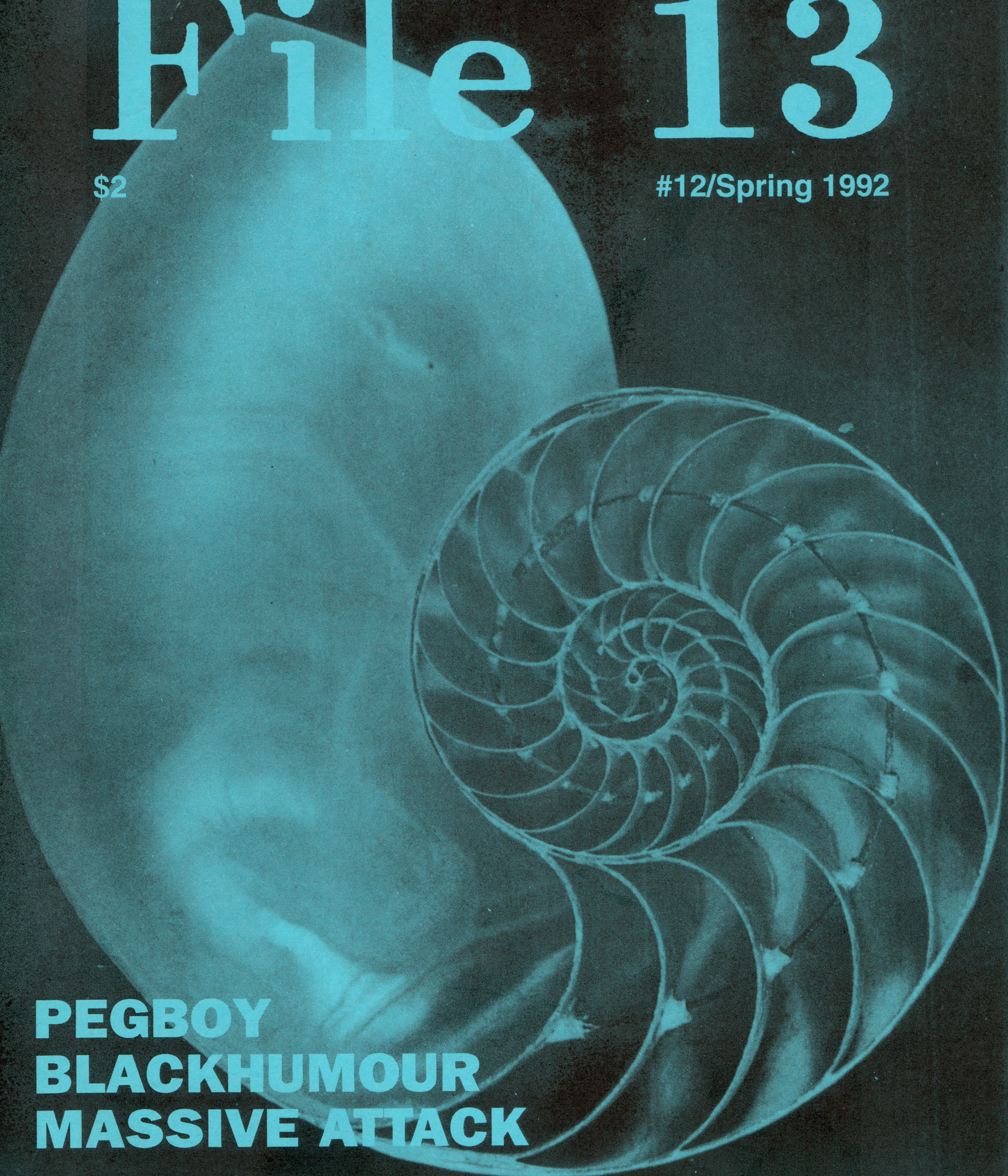
File 13

$2

#12/Spring 1992



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File 13

ISSUE #12
MARCH 1992

Every couple of years, it seems, my life gets to the point where it's just spinning out of control, where trying to juggle the 'zine, work, and a social life seems totally impossible. Then it's time to just chuck everything and start over, with a new occupation, a new state, whatever. I just turn in my notice, chill awhile and see what turns up next, much to the chagrin of my parents, employers, and other "responsible" people. I guess my lack of planning is kind of stupid—for one thing, I'm currently making less than I was nine years ago, when I graduated from school—but I tend to burn out doing anything for too long, and I gotta do what I gotta do.

And it seems like that time again.

I don't know if I'm good at picking environments that aren't suited to me, if I simply dislike the feeling of being comfortable, or perhaps "stuck in a rut"—what is the difference anyway? Some people might even say that every time I find a good thing, I give it up, or even that I'm searching for some elusive thing that doesn't exist. Whatever it is, I seem to have these little identity crises every so often.

What I'm saying is that the need for change doesn't necessarily stem from being miserable, or anything. The last two times it's happened, I've actually been sorta doing O.K. Other than being terminally behind in everything right now, things aren't so bad. For one thing, it's nice to be in a relationship that makes me feel warm and fuzzy instead of giddy and agitated, for a change. And as for work, I enjoy what I'm doing now more than in any other job in recent memory. It's more the screwy company and shitty work environment that sucks.

New Hampshire remains a nice place to get away for a long weekend, but I wouldn't recommend it as a place to live—unless you're the type who really wants to get away from all manner of civilization. It blows my mind that a state as small, as white, and as backwoods as NH serves as the indicator for the political trend in this country, but maybe it says as much about the US as a whole than it does about this state.

'Cause as I write this, the first primary in the nation is less than 48 hours away. And though I've been mostly sequestered in my room doing layout on the 'zine, I've been polled on my political views, been called by half a dozen people urging me to vote for one presidential candidate or another, heard NPR interviewing people at the Peterborough Diner to get their comments, and seen campaigners on every street corner of every town with a population more than 2500. And I've been handed, mailed, and gotten stuck under my windshield wiper literature on everyone from George Bush to Andre Marrou (Libertarian party) to Leonora Fulani (New Alliance party) to Charles Woods (some guy who got his face blown off in WW II). All this is radically different from the scene in New Jersey, whose primary comes so late (in May) that the field has been narrowed to a mere handful; there are something like 70 presidential candidates on the ballot here in the Granite State. And that's not even including the write-in campaigns for the likes of Ralph Nader or Mario Cuomo. *[And there was a woman from the* L.A. Times *conducting an exit poll in Keene today.]*

The media's idea that New Hampshirites might be capable of speaking for the entire country is particularly odd considering the fact I've met a whole bunch of people here who have barely been out of this state. Or whose idea of a really big deal is a once-a-year trip to Boston, a whole 90 miles away. New Hampshire doesn't *have* to be this backwoods. People make it that way by choice.

I guess I'd been hanging around with yuppies too much, before my tenure here, but I've had some rather eye-opening conversations up here. A former co-worker told me about this biker guy she was seeing who invited her to a swap meet and told her, "I'll have to keep you chained to my bike. That way no one will mess with you, 'cause they'll know you're my personal property." The same principle, apparently applies to the "slave ring," a piece of jewelry where the woman wears a ring attached by a chain to the man's ring. And what about a relative of a friend who feels naked without an article of clothing that has a Harley logo and who thinks homosexuality is "catching"? I already told you about pulling up to a car dealership and staring at the end of a shotgun wielded by some guy in full camouflage. Yeah, this is the '90s, alright.

And I've learned a lot about the effect money, or lack thereof, has on a person's whole outlook on life. Sure, I've seen beggars in NYC and all that, but it's easy to flip 'em a quarter and forget about 'em when you've got a job and a roof over your head. I'm talking about the huge range in what's referred to as the "middle class," when I'm making a quarter or a third of what my college chums are pulling in and feel downright rich compared to some of the folks I've met here. O.K., it doesn't take a genius to figure out these things, but I've never really been exposed to people to whom a recession means not going without luxuries, but going without necessities.

In general, a fuck of a lot has happened, even since last ish—in my personal, career, and family lives—and that's one of the reasons for the lateness of **File 13** #12. I could go on forever on what I've learned about love and sex, mental illness, nature vs. nurture vs. self-determination, and lots more, but I won't.

Though I continue to get the largest amount of response to these so-called editorials, I've decided to restrain myself a little in these pages. For one thing, some stuff *is* probably a little too personal; it's gotten back to me that some people actually feel a little embarrassed at reading the 'zine, saying it's like peeking at someone else's diary. And the 'zine is getting a bit big to just let it all hang out. I'm always touched at the letters I get—often, those who write share a lot of similar tales of *their* life experiences (with admonitions that I please not print this letter)—but it *is* a little weird getting such intimate feedback from near or total strangers.

Hopefully, though, **File 13** will retain its personal feel. It's intended as a magazine by ordinary people, for ordinary people—not by music critics for music fans, or any thing like that.

But things *are* changing here at the 'zine. For one thing, this is the first issue since #4 to be done on a computer (the last time I started life over). That's another reason we're behind schedule. When December rolled around, I was facing the task of typing the whole mag (including well over 250 reviews) on a typewriter that was threatening to go on the blink again, and that prospect didn't exactly fill me with holiday cheer. So I dug deep and invested in a Macintosh (Thanks, Shauna), and the production part of the 'zine has almost become *fun* again.

Also, we've been getting such an overwhelming number of new releases

EDITORIAL, continued on page 54

Editor: Mark Lo

Staff writers: Lawrence Crane, Steve Davis, DJ Robsquad, Mason Jones, Kevin Kraynick, Richards, Manny Theiner

Contributors: Debbie Jaffe, Shauna Lo, and Loren Rhoads

Everything uncredited is probably by Mark Lo

Pre-press helper and spiritual advisor: Dan Croteau

Thanks to Ed (for the leftover vinyl), Bryan & Jenn (for continuing to put of with long nights of fucked-up music), Janet (for matchmaking help), Liz (for having parties that make things happen), Mary-Kate (for tickle fights in public places), Christina (for being more like a best friend than a pen pal), Holly, Spot, and Medy (for coming out to play), George & Andrea (for the walking tours of Boston), Lou and Keith (for Xmas-type stuff), Don (for not killing me for walking out on him), Ken, Patti, and Steve (for attending the BMAD Film Festival), Kristin ('cause I forgot last time), and Trish (for grapes, sushi, and moral—and immoral—support).

Back issues $2 each, or 3/$5: #4—Survival Research Labs, Fire Party, *Too Far*, #5—Killdozer, Carl Howard, Alan Jenkins; #6—Hullabaloo, Community 3, Master/Slave Relationship; #7—J.S. Laboratories, China tour diary, life in the psychiatric ward; #8—Re/Search, Electronic Cottage, Green Magnet School; #9—Pain Teens, Zeni Geva, Love Child; #10—Treponem Pal, PGR, Alligator; #11—Sekiri, Gerogerigegege, Alchemy Records, Public Bath; #12—more good shit.

Subscriptions: $5/year (3 issues), so what are you waiting for?

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Ad deadline for #13: May 31, 1992

ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO MARK LO

File 13, Box 175, Concord, MA 01742

They Love Us In Peoria

I actually did have some more letters to print, but they somehow got sucked into the vortex of what I call a bedroom, never to be seen again. But, please do write. We love to hear from you.

11-25-91

Thanks for **File 13** #11, a great lookin' issue and cover. I always enjoy the "live" reviews ("Nightcrawlin'"). We'll be lookin' forward to Hermanos Guzanos' review in #12. Now it seems most of our time is devoted to our "Offbeat" TV show, but it's worth it getting some real talent on TV in one form or another, with artistes like John Bartles, Little Fyodor, Eugene Chadbourne, Humidifier, ST-37, and more...

Darrell Draeger
Bakersfield, CA

[excerpts from enclosed flyer:]

The cable access TV show, *Offbeat*, is accepting submissions of music, art, and humor. If you have a video of something weird, crazy, or just plain offbeat, we would like to use it for a segment on one of our shows! We are currently aired on West Valley Cable, Wednesdays at 9:30, with plans for L.A. and Hollywood. We have already received some great stuff, so send something in already! Participate in the fun. 1/2 and 3/4-inch tapes accepted. See you on *Offbeat*. Send tapes to: Darrell Draeger, 721 N. Fairfax, Bakersfield, CA 93306.

Hello. Wanted to say that I think your magazine is really cool and an actual "good read," as compared to the high percentage of 'zines that are more fluff than stuff. I particularly enjoyed #11's Japanese spotlight issue, as that is an area I too am turning my musical attention. The musical genre crossover is also great. Encompassing.

Anyway, a few comments. The fiction was a nice touch, but you really shouldn't cont. it way at the back somewhere; it destroys the rhythm of the piece. Your constant habit of breaking articles only to have to hunt down the conclusion down at the end among an array of other leftover pieces, once again, ruins continuity. Maybe you should examine your layout techniques. Anyway, keep up the great work.

Michael Martinez
Black Milk
Portland, OR

[Yeah, sure, Mike. You try laying out a 'zine when all you've got is cut and paste. Actually, though, I'm not really fond of jumps either. Hopefully, with the Macintosh, I'll have enough flexibility to have fewer breaks in the future. Stay tuned. —ed.]

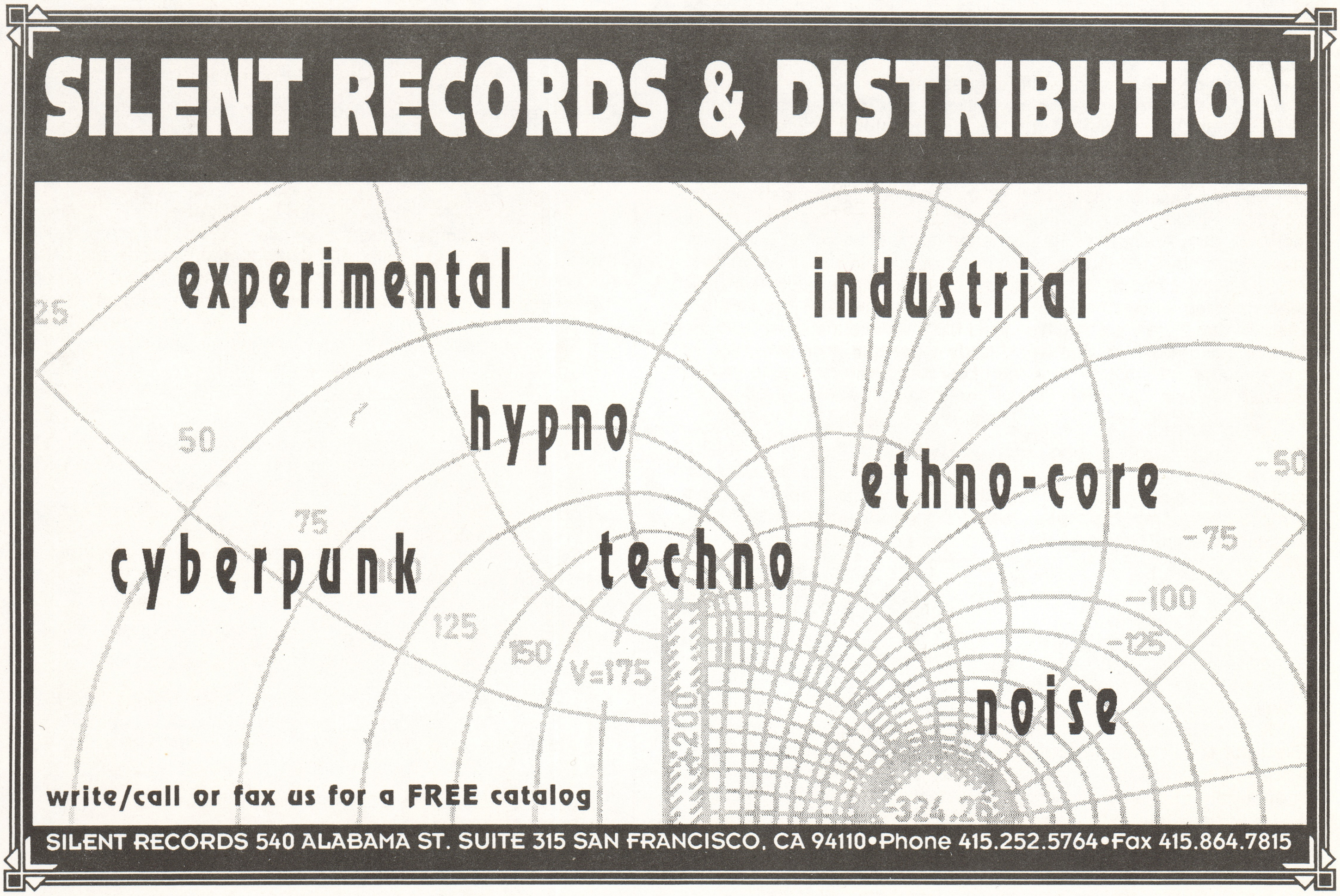
Hey Mark,

Thanks for the review. Sorry "Richard" didn't like the band [Monet's Gardens], but hell, he didn't like anybody else either. Hope that his life gets an upper somewhere. You can only stay a sophomore so long.

Yours,

Russ Ketter
Imagine Records
Oakland, CA

[Watch it, bub, that's "Richards." But, yeah, the guy is in fact on the road looking for the "upper" of which you speak. Last we heard from the guy, he was roaming the flats of Nebraska, trying to pick up stray women, dogs, and cows. Since he's working his way west, he should be banging on your door sometime soon. —ed.]



Sixth Grade Reading Level

That's about what mine is these days. Seems that when my mind gets too cluttered up, the first thing to go is my concentration, so the reading list is a little short this issue. Hopefully, I'll do a bit better next time...

***Alternative Gallery* New Arrivals From March '89 To July '91**—The Alternative Gallery archive has been collecting underground publications since 1982, aiming to serve as a center for dispersing contact addresses and subscription information for live 'zines and photocopies of dead 'zines, kinda like an international *Factsheet Five*. North America is represented in these listings by publications ranging from *Sound Choice* and *Search & Destroy* to *Kick It Over* and *Naughty Naked Dreamgirls*. Not much info is provided here, but they may be able to find that obscure mag you've been looking for. (IRCs?, P.O. Box 20037, GR-11810 Athens, Greece)

***The Benny* #10**—For those who thought past issues of **File 13** were poignant...The editorial here, which concerns the breakup of the editor's marriage, is raw with emotion, and the other pages reproduce actual documents on his wife's discharge from the Army: "Soldier is very depressed, cries a lot and expresses an extreme desire to return home. She states she cannot cope with the pressure. She also states that she has attempted suicide in 86 and 84 with overdose of prescription drugs." Other material questions the state of male/female relations in America. The author reflects on why women allow men to take advantage of them, and he prints clippings of various articles: a porn star dissuades teenage girls from entering the biz, the *NY Times* report on a crowd of onlookers who watch a man rape his 3-year-old niece, etc. *The Benny* is not so much a 'zine as a scrapbook of items that have had a profound effect on the editor's life. (price?, c/o Joy Before The Storm, P.O. Box 599, Menomonee Falls, WI 53052-0599)

***Dial M For Motherfucker* #2**—This Milton Wayne character is full of it, as far as I'm concerned, claiming his writings are "satire." Like we don't have enough bullshit in this world without someone "pretending" to be sexist. (And I'm sure he clipped those nude pix in the last issue from *Ms.* or *Good Housekeeping*. I'll take *Skin Trade* any day.) Anyway, #2 doesn't stack up to the debut ish. There's interviews of Dirt, Tar, and Suckdog—as well as the usual news clippings about axe murderers and child molesters. But I *did* learn something important from this issue: Gerardo was formerly a member of Menudo! ($1+3 stamps, Milton Wayne, 951 Quinton Ave., Trenton, NJ 08629)

***Godsend* #17**—This mag really begins to blossom this issue, as ints w/ Skinny Puppy, Swans, PBK, and others do more than scratch the surface of the artists. The section of short, mostly industrial reviews continues to grow, and most of them come pretty close to the mark. Layout is slapdash, but visually interesting. ($1.25+stamps?, Todd Zachritz, 1401 Fuquay Rd., Evansville, IN 47715)

***Heroina* #2**—This magazine suspended publication due to the war between Serbia and Croatia, and that's too bad, 'cause this is a sharp-looking, full-color mag with pages and pages of music news about bands such as the Cramps, PiL, and the Dead Milkmen and longer articles on Iggy Pop, Laurie Anderson, My Bloody Valentine, and the Neville Brothers. A group-by-group run down of the Amphetamine Reptile roster is included, as is a fair bit of coverage on European underground culture. My Pal Drazen has hoarded some back issues, so those of you up on your Slavic languages may want to write for this one. (trade, Drazen Krsnik, Heinzelova 20, 41000 Zagreb, Croatia)

***The Lil' Rhino Gazette* #18**—It's been awhile since I've seen a copy of this friendly little 'zine. This issue features a nice chat with John Crawford on his ten years of drawing the *Baboon Dooley* comic strip, as well as somewhat lesser ints with Hollowmen and Godflesh. A nice touch of *LRG* is how the different reviewers have their own sections and rating schemes (though they all seem to love every record that comes out), and K.K. does some very thorough 'zine reviews. Small print tends to make you kinda squeany-eyed after a while, though. ($2.75, K.K. North, P.O. Box 14139, Arlington, TX 76094-1139)

***Little Free Press* #87**—Ernest Mann "dropped out" of life back in '69, at age 42, and *LFP* is about his continuing existence living out of a car. #87 delivers some fascinating accounts of Mann's everyday activities and of his acquisition of a wrecked '87 Tercel that serves as his transportation and his home. Also included are some ideas on living with "a welfare check and 24 hours per day free time." Unfortunately, life on the road seems to have loosened a few of the guy's screws. Check out the following on the possibility of his being sexually assaulted while asleep in

'ZINES, continued on page 54

That's Alright And That's O.K.

Christopher Bodor Chats With Pegboy's John Haggerty

During the summer of '89, I had the opportunity to hang out with guitarist John Haggerty at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York during the New Music Seminar. John was still in Naked Raygun at the time. We met up at a party for 24-7 Spyz, and I think, later that evening, we also went to a Beggars Banquet party together. I also ran into Buster ("Fatty") from Bad Manners that night. *[Name drop much, Chris? —ed.]*

A few months later, I was surprised to hear that John had left Naked Raygun. I spoke with John over the phone, on 12/21/91, about his new band, Pegboy, and their new album, *Strong Reaction.*

JH: John Haggerty
F13: Christopher Bodor

F13: How do you view your time in Naked Raygun? Is that ancient history?

JH: Yeah, it is ancient history. I used to think it was a waste of time. When I first left the band, I was really disappointed and upset that I had wasted so much time. I was involved with something that was obviously going to go nowhere, or not as far as I wanted it to go. But, I came to realize that my time in that band was not a waste. I learned a lot from Naked Raygun—mostly *not* what to do. Still, it was a learning experience. I think it made forming Pegboy easier. It made Pegboy's success easier. By being in Raygun, I learned what to do, and what not to do.

F13: Your younger brother Joe is drumming for Pegboy. Were you always planning one day to start up a band with Joe, even during your Naked Raygun years?

JH: Yeah. In fact, Joe used to play with us. Sometimes, when Eric [Spicer] would be sick, or something, my brother would actually fill in. So, he played with Naked Raygun a few times, as a fill-in. I started in bands in 1980, and I got into Raygun in 1981, so that was pretty much before my brother learned how to play well enough to be in a band. But, in the years that I was in Naked Raygun, he developed into a good drummer.

F13: Everyone in your new band has had a pretty impressive musical past. [Joe served in Bloodsport and the Effigies, and vocalist Larry Demorea and bassist Steve Saylors were in the Bhopal Stiffs.] Give me an idea of how the four of you got together. Was talent the main criteria?

JH: Really, it was kind of like a friendship thing, because we have known each other since the mid-eighties. I always liked the Bhopal Stiffs. I would always go and see them, whenever they would play. I got to be good friends with Larry and Steve. When they went into the studio to record a single, they asked me to come along and help out. So, we have gotten along for a pretty long time. The scene in Chicago isn't really that big. You eventually meet just about everybody.

F13: What kind of reactions has the new album received?

JH: Well, with the exception of England, all the press has been favorable. When people come up to me, their personal reactions are also very positive.

F13: Is England down on you guys?

JH: Yeah. England is down on us for not being the "next big thing." They call us "retro," and all that stuff. It is true though; our music is not ground-breaking music. But, then again, what is?

F13: Are you responsible for writing any of the lyrics?

JH: I do very little writing of lyrics; that is Larry's department. Each of us has our strong points. I don't devote as much of my time to writing lyrics as I do to writing music. Larry, he probably divides his time equally among lyrics and music. Steve and Joe, they kind of pad out the songs. It is a collaborative effort.

F13: John, that phrase, "sometimes when you're all alone" crops up on so many songs. I'm wondering if isolation is a band theme, or anything.

JH: No, that's just Larry. I don't know. That is just stuff that pops into his head. That's what he feels like singing.

F13: "Locomotivelung" is such a powerful instrumental. Emotionally, it speaks more words than the other nine songs with words. If you had it your way, would the band record more wordless songs?

JH: The way that song came about was that I had the song written, but I couldn't think of a good vocal line to go with it, so I just left it the way it was. It wasn't like I said, "Well, today I'm going to write an instrumental."

It just came out that way. Everybody seems to like it. They like it so much that I think, maybe on the next record, we will actually try to write an instrumental. (laughs)

F13: With this album, Pegboy had a larger budget. [Their EP, *Three Chord Monte* was recorded in Steve Albini's studio/basement with a budget of $180.] How have things changed?

JH: Basically, the only thing that has changed us that working with more tracks makes things easier. We don't use 24 tracks, but still, with more tracks, things are easier for us. When we did *Three Chord Monte* [on eight track], Steve and Larry had to sing both the lead and the background vocals together, at the same time, out of the same microphone, on the same track. That is pretty difficult. It is much easier if one guy goes in and lays down the lead track, then another guy goes in and lays another track over it.

We don't do any kind of trickery. We don't us any of the really expensive gadgets that studios have. It is more convenient to work with more tracks. Eight track is kind of tough. You have to be really good.

F13: Obviously, you guys like working with producer Iain Burgess, because you've used him for all your recorded stuff, so far. How do you guys get along so well?

JH: Besides the fact that he is a good friend, and an old friend, I think Iain really knows how to make ballsy records. He is not afraid to have the thing tear your head off. He is not afraid to give you a haircut with the speakers.

F13: Can recording with more tracks take away from the raw energy that occurs when two guys sing into the same micro, on the same track?

JH: It doesn't have to. I can see where it could. Sometimes these studios are a little sterile. They put you in your own little booth, secluded from the rest of the band. It does make it harder to keep the intensity, but once you start laying down the tracks and you see how things are coming out, you then start to psych yourself up to rise to the level where you want to be.

F13: Did you record the tracks live?

JH: Yeah. The drums, the bass, and the guitar are all done at the same time. Then Larry would lay down a rough, scratch vocal, and then go over it later. The vocals are done that way because he has to concentrate a little more, hitting the notes, taking a breath at the right place. The rest of the band just plays straight through, as if we were live. So, being in the studio isn't much different from playing live on stage for us. It might be a little different for Larry, but he can get himself worked up to the point where he is as good in the studio as he is live.

F13: Pegboy is barely two years old, yet the band has toured the East Coast twice, the West Coast once, and played tons of the shows in the Midwest. How do you guys come up with enough material?

JH: We've got enough recorded material for a 50-minute set [the new LP, the EP, and last year's 7-inch, "Field Of Darkness"/"Walk On By"], plus we can throw in covers. During our first year, we just concentrated on writing. It has come to the point, now, where we have to concentrate again on writing. I want to put out another record on September 1st, so we have to get the writing for that underway. We haven't written a new song since we got out of the studio with *Strong Reaction*. We might be running a bit behind now. We have to catch up. We had to move our practice space, and actually build [a new one]. That, plus touring, has slowed us down.

F13: Do you recall any memorable live shows during your recent West Coast tour?

JH: Yeah, I remember being really surprised at how well we were received in the Los Angeles area. We played like four or five shows in the L.A. area, and the support for our band was really unexpectedly good. There are a lot of great people who are really backing the band in that area. From my previous experiences out there [with Naked Raygun], I wasn't expecting too much, especially since it was Pegboy's first time in L.A.

Also, San Francisco was good. In that area, the radio stations were playing our record. There are some great people at *Thrasher* magazine who are really into us. They took us on a tour of the place, they interviewed us, they gave us free T-shirts. they are really interested in our music.

So, to me, L.A. and San Francisco were two really pleasant surprises.

F13: How about your two East Coast tours?

JH: Philadelphia sticks out in my mind. Last time we played there, we played with the Didjits. The people just went nuts. These shows are so memorable because I didn't expect anything to happen. On our first East Coast tour, we went to Philadelphia and there was a scheduling mix-up. They thought we were going to play on Thursday, and we thought we were going to play on Friday. So, we really didn't have a gig. We had to turn around and go back to New York. When we played there during our second tour, we had low expectations. Surprisingly, the people loved us.

F13: So, what's in the future for Pegboy?

JH: We are going to Europe for five weeks starting January 20th. That will be Pegboy's first trip over to Europe. The Pegboy tour will take us to England, France, Holland, Belgium. We will be mostly headlining small places.

[Surprising modesty from a guy who was in one of the most consistently good punk bands of the '80s, combining energy, melody, and some plain ol' good songwriting. I haven't heard Strong Reaction *yet, but* Monte *was a short blast of hot air that roasted my speakers. —ed.]*

Female Bonding: Christine's First Piercing

by Loren Rhoads

Pat planned to go down to the new Gauntlet store in San Francisco to get an ampallang, a horizontal bar through the head of his dick. Christine asked if he'd make her an appointment to get her labia pierced. I thought it was odd she didn't take responsibility for the appointment making herself, but whatever.

Twice she'd made piercing arrangements that fell through. The first one was cancelled by the earthquake. The second time she came down with chicken pox. This time, she said, she fully expected to get hit by a car on the walk to Gauntlet.

When she arrived at House 23, Christine asked who was going along for the show. Pat was going, obviously, and Mason wanted to buy some earrings. I wasn't going to go, being strung out and shaky from too much speed over the weekend. Christine seemed disappointed.

"Unless you want the moral support," I offered. "Someone to hold your hand."

"I might need it."

I got a rush of friendship from her like I haven't sensed in a while. I cut a line to prop me up for the ordeal. "Hope I don't pass out," I said.

We joked about how I could arrange to fall against Leslie, who planned to film the piercings for Re/Search's *Modern Primitives* video. Leslie is a beautiful, thin, muscular woman with olive skin and coffee eyes—stunning even in a sleeveless white T-shirt, black jeans, and cowboy boots. Unfortunately, we've only chatted, during which time I received no vibes at all. She must be straight.

As soon as we reached Gauntlet, Pat was rushed behind a curtain to get his piercing. Leslie disappeared back there with her camera, while Mason, Christine, and I looked over every piece of jewelry in the store. There were some beautiful rings and also some extreme weights for penis stretching.

Finally, Mason paid for his earrings. I sat down to look through the past issues of *Piercing Fans International Quarterly*. Christine paced.

When Pat came out from behind the curtain, at last, he was walking with the knees-out cowboy stride Jeff had since getting his Prince Albert the week before. He looked kind of shaky, his face both too red and too white. I scooted over on the bench to make room for him.

"How did it feel?" asked two butch older men, dressed in black leather despite the warmth of the store. They'd come in for an ear piercing.

"Well," Pat drawled, "it didn't feel like anything else."

"A lot like having a pin jabbed through the head of your penis?" I asked.

"An incredible amount like that," he agreed. The butch men paled and turned away.

"I passed out for a moment," Pat said. "Next thing I knew, Jim was handing me a cup of water and asking, 'Do you know where you are?' I said, 'Not really.'"

"No blood," Leslie complained. "AJ [Andrea Juno] wants to film a really bloody penis piercing."

"Penises don't bleed too much," Scot said.

"Women seem to be more into scarification than men," Leslie observed. "Blood doesn't bother them at all."

They see it every month, I thought.

Scot came over to see if Christine was ready. He was an apprentice at Gauntlet, learning to pierce. Jeff was his first Prince Albert, a ring inserted into the urethra and out beneath the penis head. The Victorians used the rings to bind their penises to their legs, so that their trousers would hang flat across the belly.

"I was surprised how tough the penis head is," Scot told Jeff afterward. "You really have to exert a lot of force."

Christine had chosen Scot to do the piercing because it would be free. She wouldn't have to pay for the jewelry either, since she was a training model. The only cost was the hibiclens, the surgical scrub she was supposed to use to wash the ring twice a day.

"Just to warn you," Christine said, "I'm having my period. I've got a tampon in, so it's not going to be a problem, is it?"

"I'll ask Jim," said Scot, disappearing into the back to do so.

"Do you want to film it?" Leslie asked.

"I could just tuck the tampon string out of the way," Christine mused.

Scot returned. "Jim says that it's no problem."

"If AJ wants blood," I said, "you could just take the tampon out at the appropriate time and smear some blood around."

"Please..." Scot said to Christine. "Don't."

"Don't worry," she answered.

Scot showed us back to the second booth and left us there. Christine and I fidgeted, out of things to say.

Finally, I asked if she'd like her neck rubbed. She agreed quickly. We both sat on the doctor's table with its paper covering, and I massaged her shoulders.

We were sitting there when Scot reappeared. He set a shallow dish with a steel piercing ring down on the table. "Do you want Leslie to film this?" he asked.

"Maybe next time." Christine's voice fluttered with nerves.

"Good," Scot murmured as he went to dismiss Leslie.

Jim was with Scot when he returned. Jim had a weird, subtly disapproving look on his face when he saw me. "I'm Loren," I offered, "Christine's moral support."

Jim said nothing.

I scrambled off the table to get out of everyone's way. "It's so nice to meet you, finally," I said. "I've heard so much about you."

Jim held his hands in front of his face, feigning modesty. For a moment, I liked him. Then he turned businesslike.

To Christine he said, "What do you have on under your skirt?"

"Tights."

"They'll have to come off."

I thought that was stating the obvious, but I was trying to blend with the wall and be inconspicuous.

Christine climbed off the high table. She bent over to unlace her boots. Nobody offered her a chair. Then, with both Scot and Jim looking on, she lifted her skirt and began to awkwardly peel off her socks and tights. Unprofessional, I thought. At least in a doctor's office they allow you to take off your clothes with dignity, in private. I was glad to be there—like the female nurse who stands by during a gynecological exam and makes certain the doctor doesn't do any more probing than necessary.

Christine didn't appear to mind, but then again, she was bent over, rich dark curls shielding her face. She set her discarded clothing aside and climbed back onto the table, her skirt against her belly.

Scot sat in a wooden high-backed chair facing the table.

"Put your feet on Scot's thighs," Jim directed.

Scot scooted the chair closer.

Still, Christine couldn't easily lean back against the wall for support—her hips were too far forward and the table too wide. "Where should my hips be?" she asked.

"Wherever you're comfortable."

The position she finally settled on was with her hips rolled forward, the small of her back against the table, and her shoulders against the wall. She looked pale, yet composed. Madonna-like. Resigned to the pain of birthing the Christ, though not in the least minimizing it.

"Have you thought where you want it?" Jim asked. "Or do you want a mirror?"

Pulled out of her repose, Christine curled forward, indicating with a finger

the exact place. "Before the fold," she clarified, "before it wrinkles."

Amused, I realized I didn't know my own labia intimately enough to be able to describe it, let alone to be able to enhance it with jewelry—even mentally. I began to understand how much Christine wanted this, and to appreciate how much thought she'd given it. Despite her not making her own appointment, this piercing was not a whim.

Jim told Scot how many times to wrap the rubber band around the hemostats in order to keep them clamped around the labia fold. "It doesn't need to be as tight as for nipples," he said.

They used what I assume are standard hemos, the kind with the three metal catches inside the handle so they can be clamped really tight. The only thing I've ever seen hemostats used for is as roach clips. Then you want them as tight as possible.

Scot reached forward and, using both gloved hands, positioned the clamps. "Is that where you want it?" he asked Christine.

She had only sighed when the clamps went on. Now, as businesslike as they were, she bent over to check the placement. "That seems right," she agreed quickly.

I wondered how many people asked to have the pinching clamps removed and reapplied. Christine seemed ready to have the procedure over with.

As Scot picked up the cork and the needle, I stared at Christine. Her eyes were closed, her head tilted back against the wall, exposing the long white column of her throat, framed by her dark hair and her black poet's blouse. The blouse swept over her full breasts, but hid the rest of her figure. What did her body really look like? I wondered. Her skin would be pale against all that black. The contrast pleased me.

Her cunt, her pussy, her snatch...Why is it that I don't have a word that I'm comfortable using to describe something so elemental? I'm comfortable with "dick," though I occasionally wonder if that's the word the man I'm addressing uses to describe his own. Does "dick" have the same connotations when you own one? Anyway, her cunt (as I call my own) was at eye level for Scot. From my position against the wall, I could see between Jim and Scot. Her pubic hair was lush and black, the hairs coiled beautifully against her white thighs. Inside, her flesh was a tawny rose, less pink, less delicate than my previous experience. Comes of sleeping only with blondes, I realized. Self-conscious, I looked around to see that no one noticed my scrutiny.

The tampon string was an unnatural white; it seemed unaesthetic and out of place. But it didn't seem to hinder the piercers.

Scot was learning to hold the hemos and the cork with his left hand, so he could push the needle with his right. Jim didn't like the way Scot twisted the clamp or held the cork angled against her flesh. Twice Jim took the cork away from Scot to demonstrate. Finally, huffing, 'Just a minute," he stalked out of the cubicle.

"Uncurl your toes," I told Christine.

She laughed. Her toes were clutching the black fabric of Scot's jeans. The gesture made her seem very vulnerable. It's funny how bare feet are vulnerable. We so rarely see other people's feet.

Jim returned with a cork and hemostats of his own. Once again he demonstrated the proper hold. Now, with something to look at instead of having to remember what he'd seen, Scot got the hold on the first try.

Scot took the needle out of the sterilizing solution. His hands shook so badly that I was glad Christine had her eyes closed and couldn't see them. Seeing him shake made me nervous. I blamed Jim for his lack of bedside manner.

Jim huddled closer to Scot, so I couldn't watch what happened next. Christine's moan spoke briefly of pain and ecstasy; I was sorry I couldn't see her expression.

"Now," Jim said, "it's very important for you to keep still. Otherwise you'll jab yourself with the needle."

"O.K.," Christine said softly.

"Keep breathing, darlin'," I urged, then felt silly. Everyone ignored me.

Scot removed the ring from the dish of disinfectant. In no time at all, he was finished.

Jim left the room as Scot offered Christine some water. Then he went to get it for her.

"How ya feelin'?" I asked.

"Great." Energy and adrenaline belied the quiet of her voice.

"It looks wonderful," I said, meaning her and not just the ring.

Scot returned briefly with a paper cup of water. "When you get ready," he said, "there's a video for you to watch."

"Want the mirror?" I asked as I held up the blue-framed hand mirror on the table. Christine looked herself over momentarily, then hopped off the table to get dressed.

I wanted to hug her, but didn't know if I should. The situation was weird, I told myself.

Scot took us to the back of the store and played the "how to care for your new piercing" part of the *Pierce With A Pro* video. Since I'd already seen it twice, I fidgeted, barely able to sit quietly so Christine could watch it.

Adrenaline surged through me. I felt empowered, having watched what I'd just watched and not passed out. I felt like I'd been through a mystical rite with Christine, as if I'd helped somehow and not just been an observer. I felt our friendship had been tested and strengthened. I felt like I'd helped her give birth—like a new father—separated from the process and unable to really understand it, but a part of the experience, nonetheless. I felt good, and was embarrassed by the feeling.

During the video, Christine laced her boots back on; here was a chair where she could do so comfortably.

On cue, Scot arrived as the video ended. He and Christine thanked each other profusely, adrenaline making their voices quick and emotional. Scot asked if he could hug her. Christine pressed herself into his arms.

I turned away, chastising myself. Now there were two people who had underwent a mystical experience together, I scolded myself.

On the way home, Christine was high, high, high on endorphins. She talked about getting one piercing a month. She sang, "I've got a secret." She walked close to me, practically giving off heat, pleased with herself for surviving the ordeal and for obtaining such a nifty token.

Unable to restrain my curiosity, I asked, "Why did you want me to come along? Why me and not someone else?"

"I was hoping it might convince you to get one yourself."

"No chance of that," I said. "It sounded like a wonderful experience—that moan of yours—but I don't know what I'd do with the ring afterwards. I don't enjoy my ear piercings enough any more to want to get any other permanent jewelry."

She smiled, clearly thinking that I would change my mind.

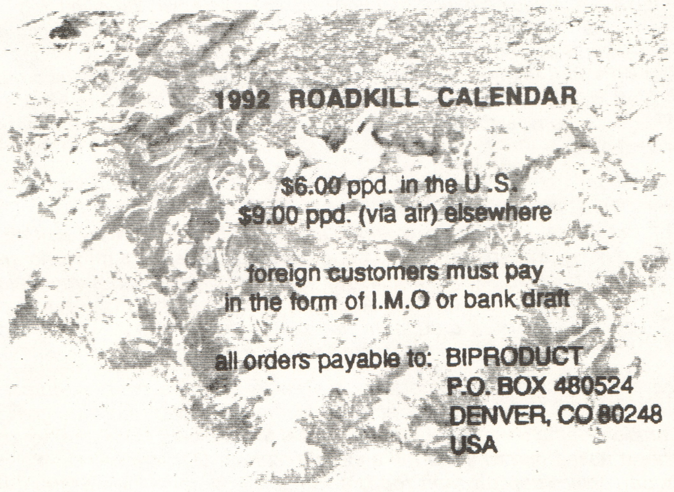
After we reached home, Jon called. "Did Christine get the ring in her pooter?" he asked, scandalized and loving it.

"She sure did." I laughed. "Pooter"? There's a word for it that I didn't even know.

When Christine was going home for the night, I told her, "I'm glad you took me along today. I feel really good about everything. Would you mind if I hugged you? I wanted to do it earlier."

"I was hoping you would."

I stood up, and we held each other. I didn't think about the experience, didn't analyze it for once. Instead, I just enjoyed holding her.



Gearing Up For A Massive Attack

photo: Chris Carroll

Have you ever met a person who's really nice, but for some reason—circumstance, or personalities, or whatever—the two of you just don't quite click? That's what happened when I talked to Mushroom, of the group Massive Attack.

I mean, here I was, excited at the prospect of talking to a member of one of the more intriguing dance-oriented acts to come down the pike lately. I I knew that Massive Attack emerged from Bristol, England, descending from an outfit called the Wild Bunch, which also featured Nellie Hooper, later of Soul II Soul. And I enjoyed the group's debut on Virgin Records, entitled Blue Lines, *a product of the three main band members—British DJs, Mushroom, Daddy G, and 3-D—and a revolving group of singers and rappers.*

The album's "Safe From Harm" featured the warm, soothing vocals of Shara Nelson, over a cool slinky beat, and "One Love" and "Hymn Of The Big Wheel" boasted minimal rhythms and philosophical vocals from rasta guy Horace Andy. The title cut grooved on whispered raps and an easy soul backing, while "Unfinished Symphony" had lush symphonic textures over a house beat. And then you had the polyrhythmic "Daydreaming" and a creditable remake of William DeVaughn's "Be Thankful For What You've Got," with Tricky Kid on vocals.

But while Mushroom was certainly a likeable chap, he definitely turned out to be the introverted counterpart to the other two, more outgoing members of the band. So, I didn't quite get the answers I was looking for when I asked him what he felt about the current U.K. dance scene (he didn't really keep tabs on today's music), how the clubs Stateside compared with those in Europe (actually, he prefered to stay in), and what it was like to be entrusted with remixing songs for artists ranging from Lisa Stansfield and Neneh Cherry to Nusret Fateh Ali Khan (he didn't get off on reworking other people's material at all).

Instead, I found out how the differences in personalities of the three DJs make Massive Attack's attention to texture and subtlety as important as their awareness of beat and rhythm. For this outfit, it's as important for people to be able to sit and contemplate their music as it is for them to be able to get up and dance.

I used my lunch break to talk to Mushroom by phone the day of Massive Attack's "soundsystem" show in Boston on 11/5/91.

M: Mushroom
F13: Mark Lo

F13: Hi. Is this Mushroom?

M: Yeah.

F13: It's Mark Lo, calling from **File 13**.

M: Hello, Mark. How are you, man?

F13: Pretty good. So, where are you guys playing tonight?

M: A place called Paradise, I think. I don't know what it'll be like.

F13: (chuckles) It's a pretty nice place, actually.

M: You've been there, eh?

F13: Yeah.

M: Alright.

F13: So, who *is* Massive Attack? Do you use the name to refer to the three of you, or the larger collective.

M: Uh, the larger collective, although there are three main members: me, D, and G. And then there's a larger collective of people, and that's what it is.

F13: I guess you're referring to some of the other vocalists, like Shara or Tricky Kid...

M: That's right.

F13: How did you go about recruiting them?

M: I don't know. We've known them years, really. So, it more or less ties in like that.

F13: They just came out of the same musical scene?

M: That's right. Yeah, exactly.

F13: So when did you guys get together? It was back in the early '80s, initially?

M: Right, '83, with the Wild Bunch. And it just rolled on from there.

F13: Did you start out with your own compositions, or were you remixing other people's material?

M: We started with our own compositions. We had some Wild Bunch records, and then one Massive Attack record. That was "Any Love," but just part one.

F13: How do you think your sound has evolved since then? So many

different elements come together...

M: The elements you can hear, we've always been interested in. The money was around, 'cause we had a record deal, so we thought, "Why not? Let's bring the elements together." We've always wanted to be able to do that sort of thing, but we never had the financial backing.

All those beats, we made up a long time ago, and we had the samples, as well. The orchestra was something that we always wanted to do.

F13: I was wondering, how do the three main members interact in the creative process?

M: One of us will come up with an idea, and we'll just build on it until we feel happy. Then it's finished, and we go mix it. We all do a bit of both, writing the music and the lyrics. We're all sort of interacting.

F13: You do one cover on the album, "Be Thankful For What You Got," why did you decide to do that tune?

M: Well, we've always wanted to do a cover, just do our own version, really. I don't know it that comes out of the reggae background, 'cause they do a lot of covers. So, we did it our way.

F13: Where does the reggae influence come in?

M: Bristol's always had a heavy scene like that, you know?

F13: Is Horace Andy out of that scene?

M: He's from London, actually. We haven't really known the guy before. But his music was always being played.

F13: Have you been surprised at all the media attention you've gotten, particularly in the U.K.?

M: Yeah, we have, really. We just wanted to do what we wanted to do. We didn't sort of grab any of that, it all just started.

F13: That seems to be a real characteristic of the press over there. When a band pops on the scene, everybody jumps on it.

M: That's exactly right. And that's true with cities, as well. When something happens in Manchester, they all jump on it. It's quite a small place. Things die out rather quickly, and new things are coming up all the time.

F13: Have you been pleased with the response you've gotten over here?

M: Yeah, we have, really. It hasn't been a big response, but it's been nice.

F13: So, the dates you're doing over here are the soundsystem shows. Could you describe how those work?

M: More or less like a reggae soundsystem. We've got turntables and some microphones set up. There's no sort of band, or anything. We play the dub tapes, and the vocalists sing over those. There's Tony, Tricky, and Horace. There's like eight of us here, altogether.

F13: But you *have* worked with real instruments in the past...

M: Yeah, quite extensively. "The Unfinished Symphony" was a 50-piece orchestra. We recorded that back in Abbey Road, in London. It requires a bit more organization, because the music's written and scored out. We wrote the piece on a keyboard and hired someone else to do the scores.

F13: What are some of the current acts you feel close to, or you feel are doing something particularly exciting? The Orb, perhaps, or Definition Of Sound?

M: I find it hard to say, Mark, 'cause I don't really keep in touch with today's music at all. Myself, I like older acts—70's acts, and stuff. A lot of jazz. Herbie Hancock, all those people. I always go out and buy old music. A lot of stuff today has no feeling in it. It's just aimed to get people dancing. There's no real soul or feeling.

F13: Let's talk a bit about the work you've done as remixers. How are you able to put your own imprint to mixing someone else's tunes?

M: Well, I find it very hard. Like you say, it's someone else's music. Personally, I don't really like doing it.

F13: So, that's mostly 3-D and Daddy G.

M: Basically, yeah.

F13: Have you gotten a chance to check out many of the clubs here in the U.S.?

M: No, not really. We haven't had much time, Mark. I'm not really a club man, myself. I'd rather stay in and listen to the music I want to hear, instead of going out and listening to some music I *don't* want to hear. But G likes to go out a lot. He's a DJ in clubs in Bristol.

F13: So, it's really three very different types of personalities that come together.

M: That's right. We're all different people. We all put our separate inputs into it, and that's why it comes out like it does.

F13: What kind of future plans do you have for the group?

M: Just to get on with the second album, Mark. We're going to do that, see how it goes...We're going to record some in Los Angeles.

F13: You've done a lot of work in different studios...

M: We've done a lot of mixing, a lot of recording, all over the place. It does make a difference. Sometimes, we'll be in a studio and it doesn't work at all. We'll just gorget the idea and go and do it somewhere else.

F13: How long will you be here in the States?

M: We're going to be here about a month. We've done MTV, we've done a couple of radio interviews. Probably got a lot more of that to do.

F13: So, you guys basically rotate when you do interviews? There's no main spokesperson for the group?

M: No. I never really say much anyway, 'cause I'm not much of a talker.

F13: Just let the music do the speaking for you.

M: That's right, yeah.

F13: Well, hopefully I'll be down to see you tonight.

M: O.K., Mark, definitely. See you soon. Nice talking to you.

And see them I did, though we were almost the only ones in the audience. The show was a late addition to the tour, and a late change in venue probably didn't help things much, either. But Massive Attack took the stage at the Paradise, to the projected slides of 3-D's grafitti art, with images of telephones, lightbulbs, and knives and forks being central themes. They did "One Love," "Big Wheel," "Thankful," and about three other tunes with the whole crew, before turning the show into more of a straight dance party by switching to just turntables. And here, the tastes of the individual DJs were most apparent, 3-D spinning the latest house tunes, including "Unfinished Symphony," while Mushroom played platters by Chic and other classic dance artists during his shift. And again, I wasn't totally fulfilled by the experience, especially with the disappointing turnout, but I did gain a bit of insight into what makes this band tick.

photo: Mandino

MUSHROOM, 3-D, DADDY-G, AND SHARA NELSON

When Time Is Of The Essence

Blackhumour, based in Vancouver, BC, has been active in both sound and performance work for a number of years. Unlike many artists in the underground, his work has been quite focused, though in a variety of media. This includes his audio work, which uses voice material exclusively in unusual cut-ups, surprising conjunctions, or whirlpools of sound; his live performances, which frequently do not include an audio aspect; and his quarterly journal, *Tab To Block Bicuspid*, which elaborates on his ideas with thought-provoking (non-)fictional scenarios. All of Blackhumour's work shows him to be an unusual thinker. Currently traveling, he was interviewed by Mason Jones during an extended stay in San Francisco.

BH: Blackhumour
F13: Mason Jones

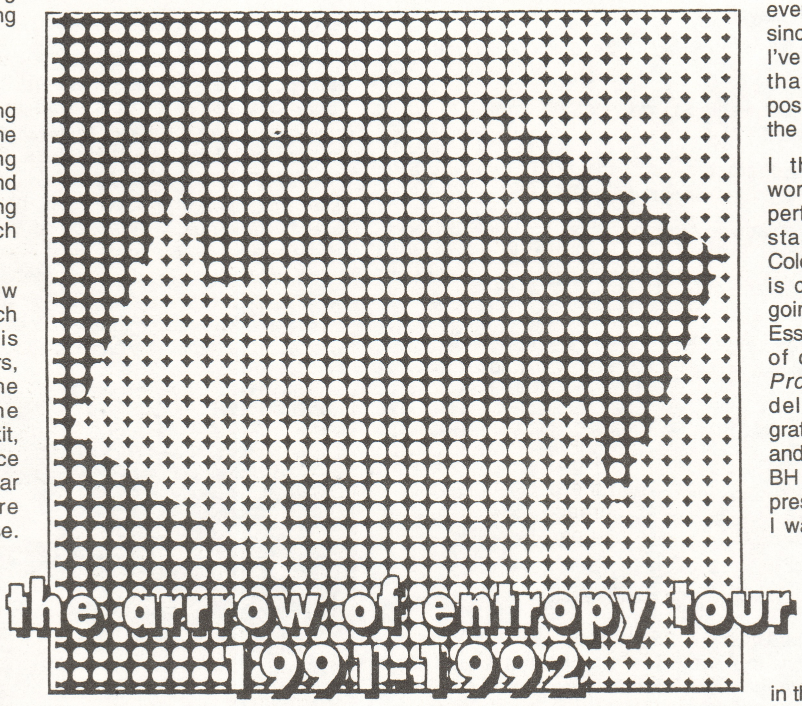
F13: You mentioned that this is a good time to do an interview because you're changing your direction.

BH: Actually, it's not so much a change as it is assessing the direction of where BH work has gone to date, looking at it and saying "Hmm, well, the most sincere thing I can do at this point would be to take it in this direction." What I've been examining lately is the idea of actually sculpting time itself.

F13: Still working with voices?

BH: In an audio context, still working with voices. But not only framing the piece, but in a certain way framing the frame, if you will. Going beyond just the actual piece and examining the dynamics of the time in which the piece is created.

For example, *Prolixity*, the new Banned Productions release, which should be out relatively soon, is going to contain 16 different factors, on eight different cassettes. The idea is that subscribers to the *Prolixity* series will get the starter kit, which is two cassettes (four voice factors), and then over the next year and a half, as other factors are added, they'll be able to get those. They will collect vouchers throughout this process, and at the end they send them in to Banned Productions to get the boxed set, the complete essays, and the last cassette of two voice factors.



The idea is that not only is BH using the human voice, but also using time in a meaningful way in the dialog. One of the things I've been thinking about lately is that time is a packhorse that art usually rides on, in the sense that music—or audio or film or video or whatever—tends to basically be kind of thrown on the back of positive time and time is supposed to carry it forward. What I thought would be really interesting to do in context of both audio and other aspects of BH work was to explode that concept, to explode the frame of time itself. By involving people in a dialog where they have to wait, where gratification is not instantaneous, hopefully participants will become aware of the actual space of time, if you will, that it takes for them to get the next thing. Then they can play with that for a while, and see how they think about that, and they have time to do that, as opposed to being presented with the whole thing all in one shot. The idea of using patience as part of the process by which the dialog goes forth is something that I really wanted to see happen, and I think that *Prolixity* and the performance projects I'm going to be working on will go a long way towards doing that.

F13: You could actually control the audience's sense of time a lot more in a live performance context, couldn't you? You can't control their actions while they listen to the piece that they've just gotten.

BH: No, but the thing is that I'm not really concerned in the audio context with controlling their actions. In fact, I want to encourage within the frame of the piece a certain kind of flexibility. That was the whole idea of actually creating factors, so that the piece isn't necessarily meant to be considered as a work in progress, but is meant to be considered a progressive work, if you understand the difference I'm thinking of. The idea is that they would be allowed into the dialog in a more meaningful sense than just simply being sat back in a chair and [being told], "Here's the latest thing, kick back, here's the headphones, go for it, just listen to it and see what you think." This way, they're much more actively involved in it.

But getting back to what you were saying, about the live performance, it's interesting that you would say that you can control people's actions, because one of the recent performances that BH did was at the Armpit Gallery in San Francisco, a two-night thing opening for Con-Dom, from England. The first night BH invited people to participate by sitting on BH's lap for a minute-and-a-half while they were videotaped in that action. One of the things that came out of those performances for me was that those particular people really seemed to want to be entertained. I realized that because of the audience's desire to be entertained, I hadn't had a clear opportunity to explain what I was interested in talking about. Because of that particular event and the other performances since I've been in San Francisco, I've really come to the conclusion that I simply have to strip all possible entertainment value out of the performances.

I think I've come up with a worthwhile approach for the next performance series, which will be starting in January 1992 in Colorado. That performance series is called The Exploding Air. It's going to be about making history. Essentially it will carry on the kind of concepts which are used in *Prolixity*, where gratification is delayed. In this case the gratification is going to be delayed and delayed and delayed. The new BH cliche is "History is a joke, the present is the punch line." So what I want to do for the next series is come up with an ongoing punch line. Establish a way of doing performances in such a way that the people who participate are capable of participating meaningfully in this ongoing punch line.

F13: Does that make them a participant in the punch line, or a member of the joke?

BH: Somebody suggested, when I was describing what I wanted to do, that it could basically be an unending joke. I prefer to think of it as a continuing punch line. The nice thing about a joke is that it's kind of like a time bomb, in a sense. You set it up, and it arcs over positive time, it travels through the arrow of entropy, and then it lands someplace, boom, that's it, the joke's over. So the interesting part about that, in terms of a dynamic, is that if it's a good joke, or even if it's a mediocre joke well told, people will wait. They know that somewhere along the line there's going to be a punch line. What I want to do is set up a more conceptual framework, so that people are waiting and yet continuing to be rewarded for the wait. So that the waiting and the reward are contemporaneous. Hence the idea of the the ongoing punch line.

The first performance in the Air series will be called "Two Guys Walk Into A Bar." What I'm going to do for that particular performance is have it set up so the performance will start at 9:30, say, and the audience will be seated at 10. So the only way the audience is able to participate in the event in terms of being an audience is after the fact. What will happen is that documentation of the event will take place, i.e. photography, videography, audio recordings, whatever is most appropriate. Hopefully I will be able to encourage the BH participants to jot down their perceptions and feelings about being involved in the event, and include

that in the documentation. So, in a sense, the audience is not coming to an event but subscribing to a publication.

F13: That makes the event the joke, or history, and the audience participation the punch line.

BH: That's exactly it. That's the whole idea, to turn it around so that the entertainment value of the work is downplayed and the idea of dialog through time is emphasized.

F13: Does that method really make the performance a dialog?

BH: Oh, I think very much so. The audience will be able to provide feedback much more so, in some respects, than they would if it was just a one-off event, bang, they come at 8:30, they leave at 9, that's it. One of the things about a dialog is that—even for a fairly minor one—it requires a level of commitment to the process of dialog. If people interested in the BH dialog want to participate meaningfully in this stage, it affords them, and it affords me, a much larger block of time to deal with questions, queries, critiques, all that kind of stuff.

It's a logical extension as far as I'm concerned of the BH idea of using the human voice in an audio context: "The sound of poetry moving through the arrow of entropy in positive time." This is a dialog, moving through the arrow of entropy in positive time. It's very important for me that people understand that I personally am committed to the concept of art as dialog. If they're interested in participating in a meaningful way with the BH work at this point in time, then they, too, are going to have to make a commitment beyond just the simple desire to be the loudest voice heard.

F13: Do you feel that anyone might find that this is taking the emphasis off the content of the performance and putting more emphasis on the practice of the performance? Does the content lose any power because of that?

BH: That's a very worthwhile question. My answer is that the whole framework is set up so that the performance in and of itself is important, but it's important within the context of the larger frame of the ongoing punch line. The two complement each other in a way that can be as meaningful as the participants care to make it. In other words, you go to a party. You have an interesting conversation with someone. As long as that conversation stays interesting to you, you'll stay with that conversation. And as soon as that conversation becomes irrelevant to you, or loses value, you'll walk over to the next conversation. That's entirely appropriate. I think people will get bored with this particular conversation, and they'll want to move on to the next thing. That's great, that's fine. But I'd like them to do that with the awareness of what they're doing. That's what I'd like to see happen. If I do that, then the performance itself has been of great value. Then the larger frame has also been of really great value, because it increases the level of awareness that they've been involved for a certain period of time in a dialog.

F13: So for instance, Friday's performance in San Francisco...

BH: Friday's performance was the last performance in the Basic Elements series, and was sub-titled "The Element Of Style." That performance at Futility Hall was actually surprisingly satisfying. Quite frankly, I didn't know what the response was going to be. What I wanted to do was to kind of close off the Basic Elements series, but also give a foretaste of what I expected the Exploding Air series to represent. For Friday's performance, BH walked up a flight of stairs and then stood there. There was no soundtrack. Then BH's assistant also walked up the stairs and stood facing BH directly in front of the audience. All the audience could really see was the back of my assistant's head, my being obscured from the audience. The idea is that here's BH, representing the ideas that BH talks about, essentially BH as his own icon. BH's performance assistant comes up and obscures that icon: the element of gratification denied. Before the audience has a chance to get bored with it, or even think too much about it, the event's over. Again, the idea of gratification denied. The response, hopefully, is not on the level of just entertainment. When I was finished with the performance, the fact that the audience had been so still during it really pleased me. I felt that if it had been too much longer, they would have started to fidget. Because people in an art context can be used to the idea of boredom as an art statement, they could wind up enjoying their boredom. I didn't want that. I didn't want them to enjoy their boredom. I didn't want them to enjoy the event. If the event satisfied them intellectually, that was great. But again, you know, the idea of entertainment...

F13: If it had gone on too long then boredom would have become the whole point of the performance.

BH: That's it exactly. For that particular event, that would have been completely wrong. This was essentially a postcard, not a Tolstoy novel. It wasn't necessary to spend any more time making that comment. That's why I was so satisfied with it. It's the shortest performance on record for BH. I think it probably clocked in at about 2 1/2 minutes, if that.

F13: You only work in areas where time is of the essence. You don't produce visual work, for instance.

BH: That's true. I've thought about doing some visual things but I'm just not really interested in stasis. Many people find stasis very worthwhile as an artistic statement, and those people have done very appropriate work in that particular context. But for me, it's just something that I have no personal interest in. In my personal life I prefer to avoid stasis like the plague. One of the things I said in the first issue of *Tab To Block Bicuspid* was that the multi-dimensional thinker visits, never stays.

F13: Why is that?

BH: Because I think that everything, entropy itself as a concept and as a dynamic, is set up to prohibit that. I think that being able to consciously appreciate that and use that as a tool for self-expression is the key. That makes all the difference. Having it happen to you when you're not conscious of it doesn't really count. But being aware of your surroundings and utilizing them is at essence the basis for any worthwhile art.

F13: For those unfamiliar with the concept, what makes a multi-dimensional thinker?

BH: Well, Jupitter-Larsen [of The Haters] and I got the idea of multi-dimensional thinking from a Vancouver artist named D.T. Candide, and we were all very excited about the concept. Having the opportunity to see a way where we could actually create or use a pre-existing model that allowed for much more latitude as opposed to thinking linearly. What the multi-dimensional thinker meant to me then and pretty much still means to me now, is a model for recognizing the plasticity of concept. That these envelopes in which we stuff things—whatever those ideas may be—are very, very flexible. One uses appropriate envelopes. One does not address a letter to Rome if interested in sending a letter to a friend in Kansas City. And the problem with thinking two-dimensionally as opposed to multi-dimensionally is that it doesn't afford you the opportunity to not make mistakes. And being multi-dimensional about the way one thinks means that you really do divorce yourself from the gravity of the situation, and that you are essentially free to not make mistakes. BH puts it in the context of positive and negative aesthetic charge. It may seem a bit obscure in some respects but essentially, as far as the BH model is concerned, things are as they are. Working within those parameters and enjoying working within those parameters is what I personally perceive as the essence of multi-dimensionality.

F13: Where are you going from here?

BH: We're going to be going to Colorado. I'll be doing performances in Denver, Boulder, Ft. Collins, Colorado Springs...That should be a lot of fun. Then there's talk about taking the Arrow Of Entropy tour to Europe, and if that can be arranged so that it doesn't wind up being a financial nightmare, if people are willing to put us up and maybe feed us once a day, then we're probably going to be able to.

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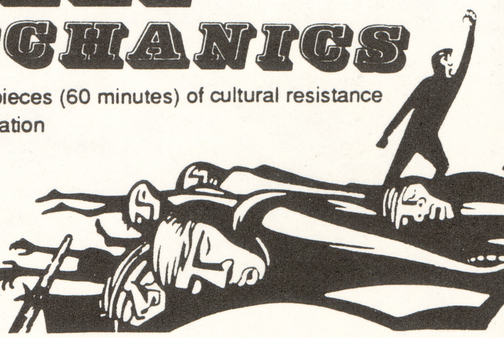

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Independent Music: Finally, A Woman's Point Of View

by Debbie Jaffe

I shun the "F" word, "feminism." Nothing constructive will occur as long as we continue to divide and alienate *any* group of people. Certain aspects of our humanity that do not change—we must eat, drink, and think (hopefully).

That's not to say the difference between the sexes don't exist, or shouldn't be acknowledged. Men are equipped with projecting sexual organs; women's are mostly internal. We have two basic types of hormonal systems that must be taken into consideration. These basic facts of nature create certain behaviors and aggressions. For, as long as we're alive, we are slaves to our bodies and those basic human demands. Perhaps Camille Paglia states it best when she says, "There are no female Mozarts for the same reason there are no female Jack The Rippers."

Does this explain why there are so few women actively involved in independent/alternative music?

Yes and no. Understanding the "facts of nature" doesn't mean we have to abide by them at all times! We can *fuck nature.*

Going against the grain is what underground *anything* is all about, isn't it? By questioning authority, questioning what we are told is correct and good, we can overcome and transcend our mundane world. Examples of this would be sadomasochism (women aren't "supposed" to be strong and in control), gay lifestyles (men aren't "supposed" to have sex with other men), industrial music (music is "supposed" to have melody and rhythm), and anti-government sentiment (people aren't "supposed" to question authority). It is by ostentatiously questioning the status quo that we might realize our full potential.

The problem with feminism is that it creates such a narrow view which to look through. We must open our eyes and consider all aspects of the situation. We don't, because we're afraid of what we might see. We must have the courage to do it despite any possible unsavory conclusions. Feminism tries to clean up an unclean world, an unfair world, and, in the process, ignores those basic facts that are precisely the reasons why this world will never be the ideal place we would like it to be. Although I'd like to avoid "isms," I think a more appropriate and potentially successful plan of action would be something called *individualism.*

Alternative music arose from dissatisfaction with major label authority. Major labels consisting of mostly white males supported mediocre artists with millions of dollars, feeding generations of mindless young people, who had and still have no idea of their own unique individuality. The media feeds us the information it wants us to absorb, creating a mass of people who don't know how to think for themselves.

Alternative music consists of a preponderance of males, and a few females, attempting to provide something different from the norm—something more personal, something more thought provoking, something that expresses new thoughts and sounds that just don't get exposure anywhere else. It is of extreme importance that independent music thrives and grows, and women's involvement is an important—I feel, essential—factor in that growth.

How many artists in *truly* independent music can you name?

Well, let's see...

Not many, huh? How many men can you name? Yes, the point is obvious, but it needs to be examined.

Women such as Julie Frith (one half of Psyclones/Ladd-Frith, and a solo artist), Nadine Bal (Bene Gesserit), Cecile Babiole (Nox), Tara Cross, Cyrnai, Sue Ann Harkey, Sylvie (D.D.A.A.), Bliss Blood (Pain Teens), Leslie Singer, Lisa Suckdog, Lydia Tomkiw (Algebra Suicide), Zouka Dzaza (X-Ray Pop), and Donna Klemm (Artware Audio Distribution) have been, or are currently, involved in independent music. Better known—perhaps less independent—are Diamanda Galas, Danielle Dax, Karen Finley, Lydia Lunch, Laurie Anderson, Kim Gordon, Cosey Fanni Tutti (Chris & Cosey), Dagmar Krause (Art Bears), Patti Smith, Paula P-Orridge (Psychic TV), and Jane Jarboe (Swans). If I were to create a list of *men*, it could easily go on for pages and pages. I'm stretching just to come up with this small list of women musicians.

There is virtually nothing stopping any woman from doing what she wants to do, so why don't women *want* to become actively involved in the underground music scene? Does industrial/noise music not serve the needs of women? Do they not relate to it? Or is the generalization that men are aggressive and women passive founded in truth? Are women simply content to sit back and let men *do it all for them*?

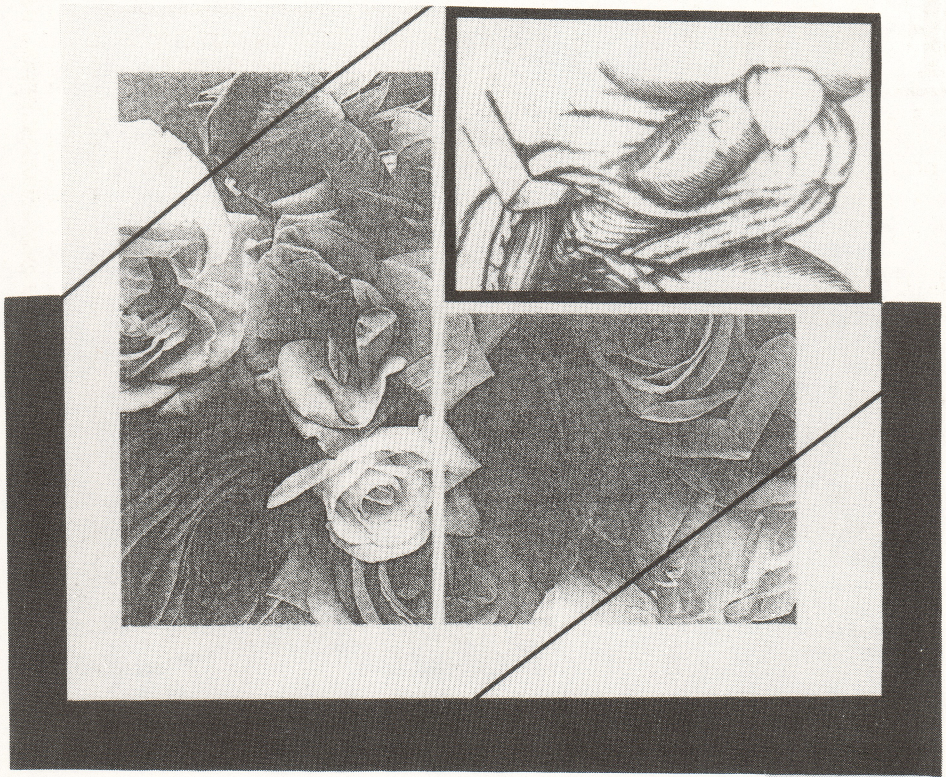
Part of the answer does revert back to our basic human nature as men and women, but that shouldn't stop us from fucking with that basic nature, from doing something really important—something that is maybe, just maybe, revolutionary.

I've been very active in independent music since 1983, in the duo Viscera, then as co-founder of Cause And Effect, and solo artist in Master/Slave Relationship. Over the years, I've been asked what roadblocks I've come across and what difficulties or setbacks I've experienced because of my gender.

I can, of course, only speak for myself, and of my own experiences. Maybe I'm merely stubborn, determined, or just plain oblivious to oppression, but I refuse to let anything stand in my way. I've not knowingly been discriminated against or held back as a musician because of my sex. I feel music must stand on its own merit, regardless of the gender of the person creating it.

Though women are not a minority in this country (we comprise 60% of the population *[51.3% according to the U.S. Census Bureau. —ed.]*), we *are* generally treated like minorities and therefore, in this (white) male-dominated society, work harder and push harder to be taken seriously in any given profession. The world of the arts is no exception.

I see the situation getting better very slowly, but it still disturbs me that the magazines I pick up are male-dominated, the people who write me and who listen to MSR are predominantly men. Even the United States government, which makes decisions affecting my life directly and indirectly, consists of mostly men. Boring, uninformed, uninspired, white men, I might add). Maybe women just need a little encouragement and incentive to get interested—so here it is.



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Yo! File 13 Raps

by DJ Robsquad

NAUGHTY BY NATURE

Well, I'm late again, Mark. Happy fucking holidays, anyway.

People, Iowa isn't as bad as I thought it might be. Rap is available in the stores (see "Midwestern Survival Guide") and on the radio (Fridays 6-9 p.m., KRUI 89.7 fm), not to mention cable TV. All the fears of cultural death proved groundless, like you give a shit. *[Told you so. —ed.]*

For '92, it looks like live bands will be backing up rappers. Samples are getting expensive. Ask Biz Markie, whose album *I Need A Haircut* was pulled from stores entirely because one song, "Alone Again," borrowed heavily from Gilbert O'Sullivan's "Alone Again Naturally," without credit. What an idiot! *[Credit for samples is stupid. Just another move by big biz to keep rap under control. —ed.]* Between that and the death of vinyl. Creative scratching will be going away quite soon, unfortunately.

Vanilla Ice's career is dead, thank the gods.

Marky Mark, eat a dick straight up...

A Tribe Called Quest, *The Low End Theory* (Jive/RCA)—Heading more toward the jazz tip this time out, even using jazz bassist Ron Carter. They seem to have lost Jarobi from the last album, claiming he was in the bathroom when they were recording. Phife steps in this time as a strong rapper. I have no real favorites, the album is that strong. "Buggin' Out," I suppose, if you must ask.

Ice Cube, *Death Certificate* (Priority)—He's a controversial, racist muthafucka, but he's slammin' anyway. Hooking up with the Nation Of Islam this time, but no less outrageous than ever. The rapper/actor remains brutally violent, blowin' up in your face. "Summer Vacation" is a how-to on setting up a drug business in St. Louis. The ladies should avoid "Givin' Up The Nappy Dugout" ("Got nuts in her mouth like the bitch was a squirrel"). Good message on "Look Who's Burnin'." Keep your thang to yourself. "True niggas ain't gay" is one of the sentiments on "Horny Li'l Devil," the other being "white men should keep their hands off black women." "Black Korea" caused a lot of trouble between Koreans and blacks, since it was liberally spread with death threats. It's a lot of controversy over a song that lasts under a minute. Similar problem with "No Vaseline," a 100% dis of N.W.A., which advocates killing their manager Jerry Heller, who is Jewish. Ice Cube has been portrayed as anti-Semitic, but keep in mind that he never said, "Kill all Jews." This is a fucking hateful, and divisive album. This country is in trouble, believe that shit.

Black Sheep, *A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing* (Mercury)—Dres and Mr. Lawnge make a splashy debut, displaying a sense of humor and a cavalier attitude. Great start on "U Mean I'm Not," an everyday gangsta fantasy. "Strobelite Honey" is about picking up girls in clubs. Apparently, it's hard to tell what they look like under strobe lights. (She: "What's your number?" He: "765-4321." She: "And the area code?" He: "Uh, 1-900...") More sex in "La Menage" and "Hoes We Knows." Best line of the year (from "Pass The 40"): "I stick gum in my ass 'cause I like to pop shit." Jam Of The Issue, Rookie Of The Year, and all that.

Cypress Hill, *Cypress Hill* (Ruffhouse/Columbia)—Excellent album, if you like marijuana. CH are some serious dopers, but are funky anyway. One of them, DJ Mixmaster Muggs, used to be in the 7A3, an old favorite of mine. That crew was just kids compared to these guys. Violence ("Hand On The Pump") and being stoned ("Light Another") are the two main themes. A little bilingual rap on "Latin Lingo" and "Tres Equis." Also notable: "Psycobetabuckdown," "How I Could Just Kill A Man," and "The Phunky Feel One." Definitely something for the blunted.

Naughty By Nature, *Naughty By Nature* (Tommy Boy)—Strong debut from the New Jersey crew. "O.P.P." is the obvious leader here, since it was such a big hit. The follow-up single is "Ghetto Bastard," retitled "Everything's Gonna Be Alright" for mass white consumption by chickenshit Tommy Boy. An odd choice because of its unhappy message. It's a ghetto thing, you wouldn't understand. There's a little reggae in "Wickedest Man Alive," featuring Queen Latifah, who gives much support to this crew. "1-2-3" and "Guard Your Grill" are also in there. A good start.

MC Lyte, *Act Like You Know* (First Priority/Atlantic)—I was never much of a Lyte fan, but this one was free, so what the hell. As the album wears on, she tries to get tougher (more "fuck"s), but the ones that stuck with me were "When In Love" and "Poor Georgie." It's alright, I suppose.

P.M. Dawn, *Of The Heart, Of The Soul And Of The Cross: The Utopian Experience* (Gee Street/Island)—Anyone who says, "What's up," to God will definitely be different, and P.M. Dawn are. "Set Adrift On Memory Bliss" was a surprise hit to me, but I guess that Spandau Ballet sample didn't hurt. "Even After I Die" left an impression. Is there a God? We'll see. "Reality Used To Be Friend Of Mine," I know how that feels. "Paper Doll" and "In The Presence Of Mirrors," too. You won't find a more ethereal rap album this year. And, by the way, they're not from London, but Philadelphia.

Latin Alliance, *Latin Alliance* (Virgin)—The Latin rappers strike, but a lot later than I predicted last year. I don't care if what they say is trite, it just sounds cool. The remake of War's "Lowrider" was ace, as were "Runnin'" and "Smooth Roughness." Kid Frost appears, as well as Mellow Man Ace, plus a few I've never heard of. This album is for those who know that Latin rap doesn't begin and end with "Rico Suave."

Posse NFX, *Black Or Ya White* (Critique)—To be honest, I can't remember a damn thing about this album a month later, but I liked it at the time. I'm sort of partial to Boston posses, anyway, because it's one of the few major cities not to produce a real star rapper yet. (Marky Mark don't count! BBD neither!)

Public Enemy, *Apocalypse '91...The Enemy Strikes Black* (Def Jam/Columbia)—I do remember this one. Unfortunately, PE impress me less and less each time. Four years ago, they were one of a few, now they've been eclipsed. "Get The Fuck Outta Dodge"? "More News At 11"? At least, *Fear Of A Black Planet* grew on me after awhile. I don't think this one will. Just last week, the "Arizona" video came out to much controversy. I was too busy watching them blow up the governor and kill the senators to listen to what Chuck was saying, which either speaks well of the imagery or badly of the music. A similar case with the "Can't Truss It" vid. Mark liked the "Bring Tha Noize" collaboration with Anthrax. Me, I'm not so sure.

Redhead Kingpin & The F.B.I., *The Album With No Name* (Virgin)—Very dancey, and an improvement over *A Shade Of Red* from 1990. No standouts, except maybe "Harlem Brown" or "We Don't Have A Plan B." The shocker was a serious "Interlude" which lists some dead homiez from the past years. Sort of brought the party to a halt for a minute. It was rather atypical for Red. Kwame appears on "Dave & Kwame (Gimme Dat Girl)." Overall, pretty lightweight, but I'm not ashamed to say I like it.

YO! FILE 13 RAPS, continued on page 17

One Twenty Twelve

Well, our selection is somewhat limited this issue, so let's get right down to it, shall we?

Charm's "Butt Naked" (Turnstyle) is hard hip house with lyrics about gettin' down and dirty on the dance floor, a single in the spirit of 2 In A Room. The wheezy, rubber-nose synth hook is the infectious part here, but there's some decent piano, too. Only a rather doll sound quality keeps this from really slammin'.

In the same vein, at least lyrically, is "Rock 'Dat Ass" by **B.O.X. (Beyond Ordinary X-istence)** (Polygram). It's got funky Parliament synths and a heavy swing/hip-hop beat, with samples of BBD, Rakim, M/A/R/R/S, Humpty Hump, etc., tossed in. But, as the raps have all the subtlety of a sledgehammer, I prefer the Rock 'Dat Instrumental—if I have to listen to this thing at all.

I actually wasn't too wild about the **Shamen**'s "Move Any Mountain" (Epic) until I heard it on the radio, but it's a nice slab of electrothrob—not as intense as Quadrophonia or D-Shake, but catchy nonetheless. I particularly enjoyed the Bones Break Mastermix and the sinister Devil Mix instrumental.

photo: Neil Matthews

ADEVA

Industrial/rave beats dominate on **Blue Pearl**'s "(Can You) Feel The Passion" (Big Life), with a lighter, bongo-sort-of rhythmic patter over the top. Androgynous lead vocalist whispers with a cold, hardened sexuality, while wailing diva backing vocals provide a bit of contrast. It's Teutonic stuff that doesn't really grab me, especially the Sex Mix, with it's overly blatant sexual content. (Definitely caught Bryan's attention, though.) The extra track, "Naked In The Rain," however, is a nice change of pace, with flutes, warm female vocals, a mellower beat, and a splash of piano.

A techno dance remake of U2's "Pride (In The Name Of Love)" might seem like a lame idea, but the end result actually isn't that far from "Mysterious Ways," if you stop to think about it. But **Clivilles & Cole** do it again on the flip of their Columbia 12". "A Deeper Love" is a 12:18 dance excursion with a hot vocal performance from diva Deborah Cooper. Her la-di-di la-da-da is almost scat-like over a repeated organ figure and persistent house rhythms, hand claps, and an occasional horn accent.

Adeva turns the tables on the opposite gender on "Independent Woman" (Capitol), singing that she needs men for just "that one thing." The single stands tall as a *song*, too, not just as hook-laden dance fodder, and her gospel-like voice is as powerful as ever, making this her best single yet—stronger than "It Should Have Been Me," or even her smash version of "Respect."

And Steve "Silk" Hurley continues his blistering streak of successes with **Kym Sims**' "Too Blind To See It" (Atco), a tune that was basically the only reason to listen to the radio during the second half of '91. With an unstoppable vocal, organ, and piano triple hook and an unforgettable shakkita-shakkita beat, it refused to wilt after a million listenings. The mostly instrumental version Maurice's Superdub Mix, removes all these trappings, adds a bit of male-voiced rap over a classic house track that sounds like it might've been written three years ago—complete with a siren-like synth line.

S.O.U.L. Records celebrated the release of the movie *Juice* with a set of promo 12"-ers, featuring the likes of Too Short, Big Daddy Kane, and M.C. Pooh. My favorite, by far, was **Naughty By Nature**'s "Uptown Anthem," with a street-tough feel, whomping beat, and ominous one-note piano. This one should be a surprise for those of you who only know the group for the light-hearted "O.P.P."

Lisa Stansfield goes for a more mature, though less catchy approach on "Change" (Arista). Her vocals are smooth and self assured, Terry Burrus' piano is cool and lounge-y, the strings are lush, and the beat is easy-going house. And the Misty Dub Mix is even more sophisticated, with Stansfield's voice only coming in for the last chorus or two. Not bad for the sale price of 49¢ at Tower.

Finally, **Sounds Of Blackness**' "The Pressure Pt. 1" (Perspective/A&M) takes a gospel choir, combines it with a sophisticated urban flavor, an Afro-centric attitude, and a punchy, uptempo beat. Nice remixes by Frankie Knuckles, too.

The Boston radio scene is looking more promising with Sunny Joe White moving into the PD spot at WZOU, so I hope this column will be a little larger next ish. Leaving a sour taste in my mouth, however, was morning jock JR's proposed steamroller bash of an assortment of Japanese-made good in the station parking lot. Fortunately, enough callers registered complaints for them to pull the idea at the last minute.

See you under the strobe lights...

YO! FILE 13 RAPS, continued from page 16

2 Black 2 Strong MMG, "Across The 110" b/w "Only The Strong Survive" (Relativity/Clappers)—"110" is 110th Street in Manhattan. North of 110th Street is Harlem. These guys have pride in Harlem. "Strong" is just that. The album is called *Doin' Hard Time On Planet Earth*. I'm interested. *[And I dig it. —ed.]*

Top Choice Clique, "Scripture" (Phase 6)—More Boston. "Potato MCs I fry up like hash browns" is as good as it gets. Rhyming "warlord" with "scoreboard" was O.K., too. The personnel: MC/DJ Force (two in one!), Scratchmaster Gemini, and John P. Fonkay, I must say. An album will be released soon, *Givers Of The Scripture*. Oh yeah, I made somebody's press kit, finally. I had no idea I could write so badly.

The Top 20:

1. Black Sheep, *A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing* (Mercury)
2. Brand Nubian, *All For One* (Elektra)
3. A Tribe Called Quest, *The Low End Theory* (Jive/RCA)
4. Ice-T, *O.G.—Original Gangster* (Sire)
5. Ice Cube, *Death Certificate* (Priority)
6. De La Soul, *De La Soul Is Dead* (Tommy Boy)
7. P.M. Dawn, *Of The Heart, Of The Soul And Of The Cross* (Gee Street/Island)
8. 3rd Bass, *Derelicts Of Dialect* (Def Jam/Columbia)
9. Naughty By Nature, *Naughty By Nature* (Tommy Boy)
10. Monie Love, *Down To Earth* (Warner Bros)
11. Dream Warriors, *And Now The Legacy Begins* (4th & B'way/Island)
12. Redhead Kingpin & The F.B.I., *The Album With No Name* (Virgin)
13. Cypress Hill, *Cypress Hill* (Ruffhouse/Columbia)
14. Son Of Bazerk, *Bazerk, Bazerk, Bazerk* (S.O.U.L./MCA)
15. Public Enemy, *Apocalypse '91...The Enemy Strikes Black* (Def Jam/Columbia)
16. Latin Alliance, *Latin Alliance* (Virgin)
17. Posse NFX, *Black Or Ya White* (Critique)
18. MC Lyte, *Act Like You Know* (First Priority/Atlantic)
19. BWP, *The Bytches* (RAL/Columbia)
20. Ed O.G And Da Bulldogs, *Life Of A Kid In The Ghetto* (Mercury/PWL America)

Best Singles: "Treat 'Em Right," Chubb Rock; "Be A Father To Your Child," Ed O.G And Da Bulldogs; "O.P.P.," Naughty By Nature; "When In Love," MC Lyte

I Wish I'd Heard More Of: Chubb Rock, Del The Funkee Homosapien, KMD

Worst Singles: "Wildside," Wannabe Dark & The Fucked-Up Bunch; "Down Wit' MTV," Todd 1, Ed Lover & all the self-promoting losers at MTV

Rookie Of The Year: Black Sheep (Brand Nubian made it close)

Makin' The Scene At CMJ

This is the part of the magazine where I get to look hot to readers of this fanzine by writing in a chatty tone about the famous A&R people I saw and the free samples I got...But, actually, I wasn't really planning on going to even going to CMJ—the last time I attended was in '87—but, thanks to Mark E. of Teen Beat fame, I was asked to be a panelist this year.

Basically, I didn't say anything intelligent while on the panel, nor did I do much to advance the cause of this 'zine. I didn't even get any promo stuff worth mentioning. But it *was* a pretty good excuse to go down and hang out in New York City for a few days, for basically very little money.

10/31/1991—Well, my panel, the "Indie Conclave," was on the first day of the convention, so I got it out of the way pretty quick. I guess it was pretty fun, though it felt like a private conversation between a few people who run small labels—with a roomful of people who just happened to be listening in. Topics included how many copies of releases we pressed (I was wearing my mothballed label exec hat that day), how much we charged for 'em, and how much money Rough Trade owed us when they went bankrupt. Developed somewhat of a crush on Jenny Toomey of Simple Machines, but don't tell my girlfriend, O.K.?

SCRAWL

After wandering around the city all afternoon and making a purchase/drop-off at See Hear, I hooked up with Kevin, Jake, and another Kevin at the bar in the Knitting Factory, where we downed a couple pitchers of Brooklyn Lager. We then stopped in a little grocery to pick up a couple 40-ounce bottles of Ballantine ("Forties" now seem to be a hit among NYC rockers, and not just the rappers), and had a wonderful veggie Indian meal at the Kismoth.

Then it was on to the Space at Chase. **Fire In The Kitchen** were much more in their element than they were when they played Boston. Can't remember any specifics about the show, but I enjoyed them quite a bit. Between sets, Jenny and Mark came over for a mini panel reunion. Mark played with this little hopping frog thing. Jenny stooped to inspect my Superchunk T-shirt, saying "I have the same shirt, the material's so cheap. When I wear it, you can see my nipples. I bet I can see yours, too." And with that, she reached out and touched my breast, stretching the white fabric tightly. Yow.

Then those two split for some bar—an incredibly good move, as **Sergeant Strange** were pathetic. The only reason I could see for their being on the bill was that two of the band members worked at the club. In the olden days, Rog & I would've given the band a couple of stars just 'cause they had a couple of attractive women in the band, but the set was pretty dull and inept. I sat in a corner and dosed, my head resting against the wall.

But pretty soon they were gone, and **Scrawl** appeared. Four years ago, at the Pyramid, they were an unknown band and still managed to blow me away. Tonight, they weren't as good, but they're still one of my favorite bands.

Jake and the two Kevins left before **Codeine** came on. The New Yorkers' sound reverberated in slow waves, like a huge bell underwater. It was a nice, rich sound, but I was getting mighty drowsy by this time, so I split before **Upside Down Cross** took the stage.

11/1/1991—Hit the exhibits at the convention today, doing a fair job at the ritual of shaking hands, passing out 'zines, and scamming promos. After a brief visit to the Virgin Records offices to visit Sarah, I went back to the hotel and crashed out for awhile.

Then I took the 1 to the L and wound up at Chase to see **Jawbox**. It was looking like a mistake, as the place was packed, leaving me jammed into a narrow corridor, barely able to see the band. Things got better once I worked my way into the back room, where the band toiled in a relatively untight fashion, breaking strings, and so forth. But that guitar edge definitely emerged, and it was worth the effort. Bassist Kim Colletta shook her hair around, eyes turned toward the ceiling, a look of ecstatic peace on her face. And I never noticed how much the lead singer, Jay Robbins, sounds like Bob Mould.

Snuck over to meet Kev at the New Music Cafe, in order to catch **David Murray And Milford Graves**. (I recommend the chicken sandwich, by the way.) Murray's sax cranked out low, husky tones, shrill, piercing wails, and sedate clucking noises. Graves knocked us out, as he poked and jabbed at his drumkit; we'd never seen anything like it. Often, he dampened the snare with his elbow, or played with both end of his sticks simultaneously. Murray and Graves reeled off a rousing first tune and a beautiful, mellow second, but they hit a couple where they seemed to realize the music wasn't going anywhere and cut things short. But they ended with another winning composition, finishing up on an upbeat note.

But then Kevin broke his beer glass upon returning from the bathroom, so we headed over to some dive in the East Village to hang out awhile and sip a couple more brews. Splurged and grabbed a cab back uptown.

11/2/1991—Spent most of the day attending panels and actually getting into the swing of things at the convention. Had lunch with the Rave/WKDU crowd, and generally had a pretty O.K. time.

After about the millionth street-vendor hot dog of the weekend, I took off to find Kevin and Jake. We were supposed to meet at 9:30 at the corner of 8th Ave and 14th Street, and, not being familiar with that neighborhood, I was a bit apprehensive at the prospect of hanging out for a half-hour on a dark street corner. But as I emerged from the subway, I saw Kevin sitting on the stump of a street lamp across the street. He took a drag on his cigarette and grinned. Moments later, Jake strolled up, the neck of a forty peering out from the top of a paper bag. We proceeded towards the river, Kev taking a brief detour to pick up a 40-ouncer of his own.

The gateway to Pier 59 was a desolate airplane hanger-type structure, with some guy sitting in the cavernous doorway on a golf cart, a roll of tickets beside him. My two compatriots were supposed to be on the Crystalized Movements guest list, but no one had showed up to present it to the door guy.

So we loitered for a bit at the mouth of the hangar—Kevin and Jake drinkin' their forties and smokin' a little doobage, the latter cracking a constant stream of one-liners—while a woman in a second golf cart

shuttled leather-jacketed convention goers to the show. Finally, Kevin and Jake decided to fork over the $7 each, and we, too, were whisked though the drafty steel building to the pier.

The Frying Pan itself was an old Coast Guard ship which sank due to neglect, after it was decomissioned 15 years ago. It was recently raised from the ocean depths and made a rather odd and spooky place to see bands.

Once safely within its bowels, I listened to **Bewitched** toil away on a makeshift stage, while gazing around at the innards of the vessel. Hulking, rusted control panels warned HIGH VOLTAGE and layers of grey paint hung in long, twisted strands from the dingy ceiling. Very surrealistic—like being trapped in a forgotten sub, fathoms beneath the surface. But I don't know why Kevin doesn't like Bewitched. So, maybe they're not that original, with lineage to Pussy Galore, Sonic Youth, and the like, but I dug the pummeling rhythm section and the screechy turntable work.

During most of the set by **King Carcass**, we sat on the deck and chatted. The band's few rockin' moments of glory were easily forgotten during the midst of the long, noodly, headtrip parts. When Jake wasn't busy pissing into the Hudson, the Maxwell House coffee sign looming in orange neon behind him, he was having a ball shooting off his mouth at a mile a minute. ("Yeah, who *were* those motherfuckin' motherfuckers...") Note that the Crystallized Movements didn't have any trouble getting *their* 40-ouncers though the gate. Fuckin' rock stars...

Next up was some No. 6 supergroup that proved that the Chills + Unrest + Galaxie 500 = way boring strum rock. **Unrest** were cool, however, with their genius-like simplicity, but they only played half a dozen tunes—which Jake reminded us several times, quite audibly. And where was Jenny? She should have been there by now.

Vermonster were a last-minute "replacement" for the Movements, though actually the two lineups overlap considerably. The band was not at all happy with their performance, but they put on by far the most exciting set I saw at CMJ. Pounding drums and Branca-like clouds of guitar noise made for a fine first tune, while the second began with several minutes of metal shredder-like feedback, before drummer Dave Lynch shifted gears into a hip-hop groove, as the rest of the band responded with some Hendrix/Led Zep-type riffing. The third piece was the most varied, as the four jammed on and on, driving all but the dozen hardiest souls out of the room. And to top it all off, Kevin found the cannister of pot he'd dropped at the start of the show. True, Jenny never showed, but Kate was there, and she was cool.

After we'd traipsed around the city and had some breakfast, I crawled into bed at 6 a.m.

11/3/1991—Sorry, but enough of NYC is enough, so I skipped town before the NYC marathoners crossed into Manhattan, deciding to head down to Jersey to visit some old friends. Saw Spot's "new" place for the first time, and then Holly and Medy came over. Red Bank looks a lot sharper these days, showing some signs of revitalization. O.K., so Charlie Brown's is closed, but we did have lunch in a new Mongolian restaurant, which was pretty neat. Then we checked out an art gallery I used to visit occasionally and stopped by a coffee shop where we had various hot drinks and pastries. Headed back north as darkness fell, exhausted but satisfied with the weekend's events.

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And Another Thing...

by Mason Jones

I'm at somewhat of a loss for a topic this time, so, instead, I'm simply going to ramble on about a few interesting things which have happened, stream-of-consciousness-like.

Back in July, I did the interviews with Sekiri and Jojo from Alchemy Records and Hijo Kaidan (see last issue) while they were visiting from Japan. They were staying at a loft-type space inhabited by Seymour Glass and various others, but I was amused to hear that Junko, Jojo's wife, was somewhat taken aback by the place. Not sure why, but maybe the fact that they had a dead cat (their pet), and an assortment of strange album covers (such as how-to hypnotism) on the walls had something to do with it. She elected instead to stay at the Sheraton downtown. But when we got together to do a noise session, this small, quiet Japanese woman took microphone in hand and screamed like a teakettle under assault by an axe-murderer.

Sekiri were pretty much the picture of cute, young Japanese women having a fun time in America—and, oh yeah, let's play some music too. They went to Berkeley and bought tons of T-shirts, ate at the McDonald's in the Mission, sat around and drew pictures, and generally had a blast. It was a bit fun talking to them since they didn't know any more English than "Thank you!"

Later in the year, in September, my friend Elden and I put on a show for the Pain Teens and Zeni Geva, despite the fact that we had little or not experience doing such things. In general it was successful, though things could have gone more smoothly. Next time, if our masochistic feelings resurface...

Thankfully, Null (leader of Zeni Geva) knows English quite well, but, still, things were occasionally hairy. The three guys stayed at my place for a few nights while they were here, and it was fun to accompany them along Haight Street while shopping. Tabata was king of T-shirts and must have gone home with a good seven or eight shirts of various types, including one for his girlfriend. Seems that Japanese visitors go in big for T-shirts; there's some marketing information for you. One night they went out alone, and came back toting two cartons of Death cigarettes, a bottle of Black Death vodka, a bottle of sake, and some whiskey. Tabata made it up the stairs, but things were a bit unsteady, and as he said later, he should have stuck to pot and skipped on the liquor. Still, they cleaned up the bathroom admirably.

Before the San Francisco show, Zeni Geva travelled down to Southern California, and made a side trip to Tijuana. The best picture from their American trip has to be the one taken of the three of them down there, wearing big sombreros and standing next to a donkey.

In October, it was my turn to travel, though I didn't play any shows. Loren and I went with our friend Ron to Europe for a couple of weeks; Loren and I flew into Paris and met Ron—who had come in the day before—at the train station. We then jumped on the train, barely in time, heading to Amsterdam. Arriving there about seven hours later, totally exhausted, we found that all the cheap hotels were full. Great. Then it had to rain. Better.

We grabbed a room at an expensive hotel, kissing some money goodbye, and made reservations for the following few nights at a more reasonable place.

The inconvenience was quickly forgotten the next day after stopping by the Grasshopper and buying some hash. Yeah, you go downstairs, push a button to light up the little menu, and exchange money for something with THC in it via a little bank teller-like window. This is a country which understands being practical, instead of spending huge sums of money in the name of antiquated morality.

Amsterdam is a city with much to recommend it, beyond the easily obtained (and inexpensive) THC entertainment. It's one of the best cities I've ever been in for simply walking around. As long as you keep an eye open for the ever-present bicycles and the extremely speedy trams, you're all set. Just walk along the canals, take side streets whenever they seem interesting, and you're bound to find something worth seeing. You can walk from the Centraal Station to the museums in under an hour, and it's all flat and pleasant. The houses are beautiful, and the canals are quite peaceful.

Naturally, I stopped by the Staalplaat record store, and by accident met a woman from San Francisco who's lived there for over six years. It was interesting to chat about the differences between the two cities, the pluses and minuses. If you're a fan of unusual music and you visit Amsterdam, you're a fool if you miss Staalplaat. It has one of the finest selections I've ever encountered, and the prices are beyond reasonable. Just note the fact that they only take cash, not credit cards (common for European record stores, I've found).

The woman I met pointed us to some other unusual entertainments, including the Sex Museum (near the Centraal Station), a fairly large museum containing books, pictures, and objects depicting sex and sexual practices throughout history. Much more interesting than one might expect, and well worth a visit should you have the opportunity to do so. Sure, the museum had its silly points, and it was lacking in a few areas, but the enormous collection of old photographs alone made it worthwhile.

Also worthy of note is the Torture Museum (on the Leidsestraat, hard to miss), with old torture instruments from the last few centuries. It's similar to the one here in San Francisco, but less like a silly wax museum; it's smaller, however.

The final item I'd like to point out about Amsterdam is the small "Vlaamse" concession stands that dot the city, selling what they call frites, and we Americans call (for some reason) French fries. Not just any fries, you get them in a paper cone, to go, immersed in your choice of about two dozen possible topping sauces. These range from barbecue to curry to mustard to all sorts of things I couldn't recognize from their names (in Dutch). Cheap and filling, these are the way to go, and once we were pointed to them by our acquaintance we gorged on frites the rest of our trip. When's someone going to open a franchise here, is what I want to know.

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What's Going Down In Osaka

by Steve Davis

Well, it's been over three years. Here in Osaka, that is. I think I've written a bit about Osaka, the good bands, people, etc. But I haven't really described it in detail, except to say it's big and ugly. Which, of course, is true. But Osaka is also a fucking cool place, with tons to do. And, unlike Tokyo, the subway system is reasonably simple, and not a horror show like Tokyo's.

Osaka has two main entertainment areas. One is called "Umeda" because of the huge Umeda/Osaka train stations located there. The other area is called "Minami," which means "south." It's located, or should I say, it consists of the area between Shinsaibashi station and Nanba station.

Umeda's image among Osakans is one of a bit higher class, though there are a couple of real sleaze zones, where mini-skirted babes lure—or try to lure—prospective patrons inside. Within these places, you can see girls strip, and maybe you can fuck them if you pay a lot. In general, though, Umeda is pretty pricey, and lots of people who would be called "preppie" in the U.S.A. tend to congregate there. Lots of girls in expensive clothes and *real* fur coats shop and dance.

There is a decent Mexican restaurant in Umeda, called La Bambas, as well as Chico & Charlys, but that place is very expensive. The Umeda area also has many "hostess bars," where salarymen ("sararymen") go, pay $10 for shitty Suntory whiskey shots, and have young women grope their crotches. I might add that many of these women are brought to Japan by scumfuck Yakuza (Japanese mafia) people using their powers to swing entertainment visas for them and then pretty much treating them like slaves. It's pretty disgusting, but I don't feel like getting into it now. These hostess bars are very expensive, though I've never actually gone...honest.

There are a couple of clubs near Umeda that feature live music. The best being Juso Fandango, which is actually two stops from Umeda station, but that's close enough. The Boredoms played there recently, and one track from Public Bath Records' *Japan Bashing 3* was recorded there (the noise aural fuckfest by musical gos Hijo Kaidan). The other live spot I've been to is called Guild, and it sucks. When we played there, they lectured us, saying we were "strange."

On to Minami! Minami is, on the whole, what I would call the cultural center of Osaka. Or at least the subcultural center. There are several massive shopping arcades which cater to the trendy, but, all-in-all, it doesn't reek of the uppity swill who populate Umeda on the weekends. The best part of Minami, or should I say my favorite part, is the area near Shinsaibashi station known as America Mura ("American Village"). I'm not really sure where this name, or nickname, came from. Here you'll find shops that blast out music by the likes of Ice Cube, P.E., Dino Jr., Slayer, etc. They sell everything from rather cool clothes to silly clothes, and they have bondage shops, too. You can even buy bongs, hash pipes, and coke scales, though those drugs are rather hard to find. But it does remind me of my high-school days, driving to the Marlboro smoke shop to buy EZ Widers (1.5's).

Of course, the best part of Minami is music. There are many cool record shops there, the best being Woodstock Records and newcomer Time Bomb. Time Bomb's owner Kenji Kodama was responsible for the recent Japan tours by Mudhoney and Fugazi. Both of these shops totally fucking rule. Woodstock sometimes carries **File 13**, too, and the girl who manages it is very nice and lets me pester her with my tapes and flyers, bless her soul. These people seem to love music and can usually be found at shows.

There are a few good clubs around Minami, the best being a place called Bears. They book all kinds of music and are totally non-biased in their approach to booking. When we played there and broke some stuff, they just laughed. I guess with Osaka's huge amount of fucked-up performers, we were pretty tame in comparison. Muse Hall is O.K., but they tend to book more mainstream stuff. Some decent bands, like Sonic Youth, have played there in the past.

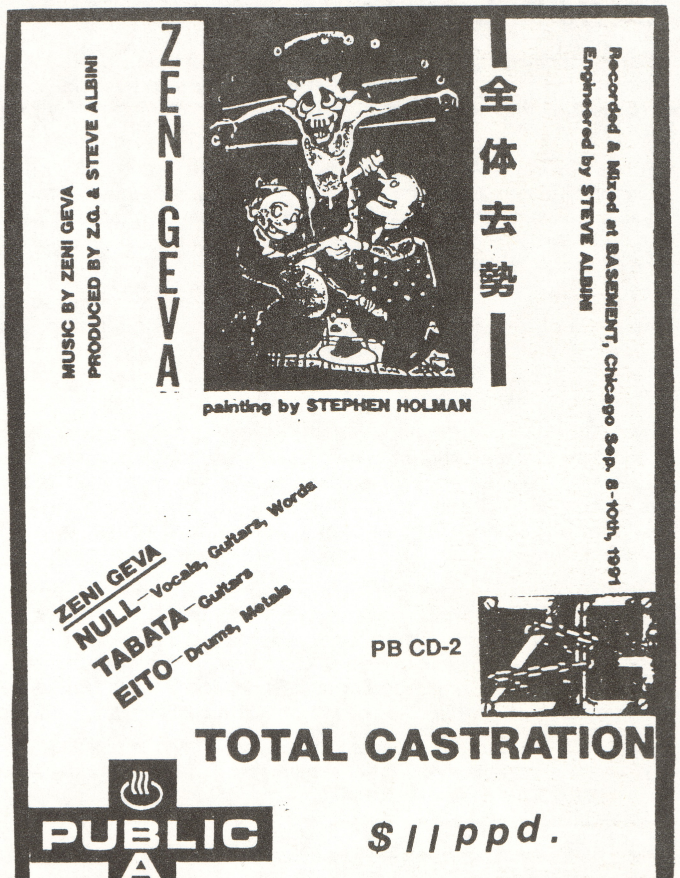
Minami also has lots of practice studios, so it's common to see some guy of gal carrying a guitar around. One *great* thing about Japan is that the practice studios here supple amps, monitors, drums, PA—everything. All the bands need to do bring are their guitars, drumsticks, and, of course, their effects boxes. The best place is LM Studios. It costs only $18 for two hours per band. They've also got great equipment: Pearl drums, Fender and Marshall guitar amps, and other good stuff.

Minami also has a place called "Triangle Park," which is pretty small. But on the weekends, lots of street musicians play there, and occasionally, they have loud Osaka bands. There are usually lots of cool people hanging out there. I like it. I like to buy a cool magazine at Woodstock, grab a beer, and go to the park and take advantage of the legal public drinking in Japan. Some of my most serene moments in Japan—that is, those when I felt relatively at one with this shit hole—were those spent there, just sitting, watching people, and reading.

Another interesting place in Minami is the Dotonbori Bridge. It's actually only a wide foot bridge across the incredibly polluted Dotonbori River. It's the major pickup spot in Osaka, and on the weekend evenings, one can see hundreds of people trying to pick up members of the opposite gender to take them to a "love hotel" and fuck their brains out. Love hotels charge by the hour.

As you can see, Osaka is pretty full of stuff. I've omitted other areas, for example, the similar regions known as "Kyobashi" and "Tennoji." Both of these areas are named for the large train stations nearby. They are known for cheap bars, strip joints, and drunken homeless people. One note: Japanese drunken homeless people usually don't fuck with you like they do on the States. They also don't have guns, so, if they *did* fuck with you, you could easily kick the living shit out of them because they're usually wasted, and weak from malnutrition. It's something I think about when I walk by and they stare at me and say something I don't like. So far, I've not had to resort to violence, and—to tell you the truth—most of these people look so small and disheveled, I couldn't do it anyways.

Well, I gotta go. When you come to Osaka, now you'll have a clue. But don't call me, because I don't really want to meet any new people. Of course, if Mason *ever* comes, we could go see UFO Or Die and cream our pants together, holding sweaty hands. Life in Osaka...dig it.



You Call This A Social Life?

JERRY GARCIA BAND
Knickerbocker Arena, Albany, NY 11/16/1991

Well, it was my first near-Dead experience, courtesy of Dan & crew, and man, it was giving me a bad vibe. All these people being happy and friendly and all, offering me hits of their joints, etc. It wasn't as if you could get high from breathing the friggin' air. Crowd was bobbing and weaving from the word "go," and I couldn't even get my foot tapping. I was there thinking, well, the Deadheads are into it, but if you could bottle this stuff, you could cure the rest of the world of insomnia. But I guess being way, way, *way* back had something to do with it, 'cause the sound seemed like it fell on the floor and died, just before it got to our seats in the back row. So, for the second set, I moved up to where Lee was sitting, to the side of the stage. It was louder and, heck, you could even tell that there were animate objects up there on stage. The band actually smoked a bit on one bluesy number. I think I even clapped.

NEVERMORE/REVOLVERS/TOAST
The Rat, Boston, MA 12/13/1991

Nevermore were a bunch of earnest Joes that sounded like your average circa 1980 Tuesday night band. We were at the Rat 'cause Deirdre's brother is in the Revolvers, and they played rudimentary rock & roll with a bit more of a snarl than Nevermore. They were more self-assured, too. I guess they were O.K. But the best band was in the cozy, but smoky balcony. Toast were a trio that was, by turns, homey and agitatedly artsy. Decent drumming and guitarwork and quite a good bassist. Definitely a band to watch out for.

ARIJIGOKU/SNAKEHEAD MEN/BATTIES BOYS/DMV
Bears, Osaka, Japan 12/1991

Yes, I actually went out. David Public and I boogied down to Electric Avenue—otherwise known as Bears Live House, in Osaka—to see some rock. My reasons were twofold: to see DMV and their drummer, Chu, from Omoide Hatoba, and to see Sam, the drummer from Arijigoku. I like watching drummers. First up were Arijigoku ("Ant Hell" in Japanese), who played a ripping set of standard "punk." They were tight, but after a couple songs it kinda blurred. Sam was pure fucking godhead, though. He pounds like his life were on the line—unbelievable, actually. The vocalist wears makeup, which is a major bummer, though. The Snakemen sucked, synthoshit that had very little soul. David and I went out to talk to Sam about Ace Frehley's hemorrhoids. You see, Sam has this friend who used to work for Kiss' record company, and...well, forget it. Batties Boys were alright. They had the rap/funk/metal thing down. Unfortunately, I don't really like that genre of music. They were tight, though, and their "dancer" was out of his mind, which is good. Their final number, however, was *so* great, kind of a Black Sabbath (c. 1970) hell-drone, which suddenly exploded into a ranting disastrofuck of noise. I was happy. DMV *totally* blew the place away, far exceeding my already lofty expectations. Sure, Chu was awesome, but the *whole* set was just great. The keyboard player had programmed these crashing sounds, a la Foetus, and the guitarist was a blur of long hair and power chords. The vocalist, who for some unknown reason also sings for the Snakehead Men, was merely an afterthought and spent most of the set just walking around the tiny stage, trying to avoid getting hit by the bassist and guitarist's hair. DMV ruled. Unfortunately, they're a part-time band, with all of the members being in other, "regular" bands, so they don't play out very often. Oh well, I had fun. —*Steve Davis*

Midwestern Survival Guide, Pt. I

by DJ Robsquad

Maybe "survival" is the wrong word. That makes it sound like there will be suffering along the way, but that doesn't have to happen—though I imagine that there are some areas of the country that are pretty lousy to live in.

But as Talk Talk once said, life's what you make it, and that's what this story is all about. Because when you're coming from the cultural jungle that is the Northeast to a place like Iowa, it can be very easy to just give up. This is about not giving up; it's about proving the existence of life on the other side of the Appalachians.

In this and future issues, I'll tell you all about Midwestern living, and how it's a hell of a lot more than pigs, cows, and plowing the fields. I'll be visiting other cities in the state (my home is in Iowa City) and the rest of the area, so you'll know what to do if you end up out here, like I did. Let's start with the home city...

Iowa City, IA—If you must live in the Midwest, live in a college town. You'll have a better shot at getting exposed to the culture you thought you'd miss. The University Of Iowa makes its home here, and that serves as an anchor for all sorts of activities, such as plays, concerts, and films. Not that I go to any of these events, but if I did, I guess I'd be pretty goddamn happy.

I prefer to judge places by other criteria...any decent town should have a good record store, and we have two. BJ Records (6 1/2 S. Dubuque St.) is primarily alternative, with a healthy selection of tapes and CDs, all of which are new. They just don't have nearly enough material on sale, so I'm not in here as much as I was in Newbury Comics, Boston's big alternative hellhole. At least, the help isn't all in black, and surly to boot.

Which brings me to a point about attitude. You'll find very little of it here in Iowa. Please note that I did *not* say that everybody is friendly. People don't just invite you over for pie at random, but at least the atmosphere is comfortable.

Record store #2 is the Record Collector (4 S. Linn St.), a 30-by-30-foot box containing used records (lots), a decent selection of import/independent vinyl, some cassettes and CDs, both new and used. Prices are a little higher than what I'm used to, but I think I was spoiled by cheap Boston stores. One of the guys from Link recording artists Head Candy, Iowa City's #1 rock band, works here, but I thought he was kind of a dick.

We also have one cool bookstore, which would not be out of place in Harvard Square: Prairie Lights, with a wide selection of books, including a gay/lesbian section for those of you so inclined. (There is a large gay/lesbian community in I.C.) I suppose some of you may be surprised to find that here, but it's still the exception in the Midwest. A wide variety of magazines can also be found here, such as *Mother Jones*, *Iowa Woman*, and *Utne Reader*.

Let's talk food. If you're looking for good ethnic fare, forget it. Hardly any Chinese, and no Indian, restaurants yet. Even good pizza is hard to find, because the business is so chain-dominated. Godfather's, Pizza Hut, Rocky Rococo's, and Little Caesar's have a heavy presence out here, so it's hard to seek out the independent pizza-maker. There just aren't that many; in Boston, it seemed like there was one on every street. Rocky Rococo's is the best of the lot, because it's closest to Pizzeria Uno in style. These people could use a good brick oven pizzeria. There is a very good Mandarin Chinese restaurant in Cedar Rapids called Pei's (Council Rd.).

Finally, it's a known fact that you can't learn without reading. The best paper in Iowa? *The New York Times. The Chicago Tribune* runs a poor second. (It's kind of hard to take a metropolitan are that refers to itself as "Chicagoland" seriously.) The pathetic attempts of the Gannett newspaper chain make the *Tribune* look like a literary giant, however. Neither the *Gazette* (based in Cedar Rapids) nor the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* have anything of importance to say, and at 50¢ and 35¢, respectively, that's a lot of nothing. It takes me five minutes to go through either of these papers, while the *NYT* can take up to an hour (very expensive, though, at 75¢, $3.00 on Sunday). The staffs at the Gannett papers have shown great skill at pulling stories off the AP news wire, and the comics are terrible, too. Seriously, when was the last time anyone read "B.C.," "The Wizard Of Id," or "Marvin"? Makes one miss the *Boston Globe*.

Well, that's enough bitching for one issue. In the future, reviews of Cedar Rapids and Madison, sports, movies, and the music scene.

Thanks, and eat some corn, will ya?

So Many Reviews, So Little Time

PICKS OF THE ISSUE

CAKEKITCHEN
Time Flowing Backwards (CD)
(Homestead)

See, I really only like music from New Zealand any more, so I've been selling all my other records to buy up the entire Flying Nun and Xpressway catalogs. Well, not really. But almost. Graeme Jefferies (ex-This Kind Of Punishment) leads this trio through one of the most haunting and beautiful Flying Nun records I've ever heard. His deep, resonant voice and melodic/noisy guitar playing embrace these surreal, mostly slow-tempo songs in a sad, resigned way. Artists like Eno, Syd Barrett, T. Fellers, and the Verlaines serve as good reference points, and that Cakekitchen could stand alongside any of those is truly saying something, indeed. *—Lawrence Crane*

COP SHOOT COP
White Noise (CD)
(Big Cat)

What CSC started with their first two albums has developed into an incredibly tight vision on this release. Some may find it more accessible, but I don't know if that's true or not. What is true is that the unusual lineup of dual bass, percussion and keyboards seems to have caused them to re-assess musical construction in a wonderful way. The intricate meshing of rhythms, vocal melody and keyboard sounds/samples is nearly flawless. The added bonus is intelligent, cynical lyrics which indicate someone who actually has something to say. It's so rare to find lyrics printed in a booklet which are worth reading that I can't recall the last time it happened to me. Anyone who could write the lyrics to "Traitor/Martyr" is alright by me. This is my favorite release of 1991, hands down. *—Mason Jones*

CRAWLING WITH TARTS/DEATH RANCH
Crawling With Tarts/Death Ranch (cassette)
(ASP)

I just can't say enough about this 1987 collaboration between these two Bay-area groups. None of the pieces on this tape are titled, but the cassette starts out with some rather "industrial" clanking, humming, and rattling sounds—assembled meaningfully, and leaping out of the speakers in a true-to-life P.Children sort of way. Later, we're treated to some melancholy and melodic lines, while the background is taken up by more of these vivid textures. Then a billowing roar/rumble takes over, accompanied by metallic percussion and grating sounds, and, later, some mesmerizing backwards string/guitar sounds. On this recording, four musicians merge in harmony to create a wonderfully organic work that seems to live and breathe of its own.

EX
6 (7" box set)
(no label)

To those small-minded people who think the 7" trend has gone too far in the underground, I reply that the 7" is the ultimate rarified medium for music. The Ex, always amazing musically and on target politically, have clearly produced the best body of releases in 1991 with the *6* box set. So far, I have been able to get the first four installments. *6.1* contains two excellent, rhythmic and noisy tunes about the corrupt politics of their native Amsterdam. *6.2* points up their interest in world folk music, as a Kurdish singer contributes the folk melodies and enclosed is an exhaustive booklet on the thousand-year-old struggle in Kurdistan. A benefit for a European support group for victims of sexual abuse in the medical field, *6.3* has a Hungarian folk song with strong, political lyrics and an anti-rape "she said no" rat-a-tat, like an answer to Fugazi's "Suggestion." Both are sung wonderfully by Katrin. *6.4* is a double single (meaning that there are at least *seven* records to be included in *6*) of the Ex, Dog Faced Hermans, and various European jazz improvisors jamming in awe-inspiring combinations—the purpose being to prevent the music from being polarized into oppressive cliques. Hence the quote: "A Kurdish singer stirs more emotion than the Pixies, that Han Bennink (Cecil Taylor's drummer) transmits more energy than 99 out of 100 hardcore bands. "Exactly my sentiments, and I wish the 1000 kids at Fugazi shows would realize that the Ex are the most interesting band in the world still doing anything remotely "punk." And I can't wait to hear the last two singles and their new LP with Curlew cellist Tom Cora. The Ex leave me perpetually open-mouthed. *—Manny Theiner*

photo: Valerie Galloway

MACHINES OF LOVING GRACE

MACHINES OF LOVING GRACE
Machines of Loving Grace (CD)
(Mammoth)

The name is meant to suggest a chemistry between nature and technology, and the album does offer some of the warmest mechanical music you're likely to hear. However, my favorite songs were the cold, snarling "Rite Of Shiva," and "Burn Like Brilliant Trash (At Jackie's Funeral)." And since the ballad "Cicciolina" was the disc's weakest track, I'm somewhat inclined to say, the colder the better. But "Burn Like Brilliant Trash" offers a certain melodic touch, and on icy yet lovely songs like "Terminal City" and "X-insurrection," the group's efforts work particularly well. Sexy female backing vocals are a definite plus on several of the aforementioned tracks—why, they'll remind you of the girls in high school who used to...oh, sorry, that's what everybody's saying about Juliana Hatfield. Check out the "Rite of Shiva" CD5, not for the unnecessary (as usual) remixes of that song, but for the darkly hilarious "All I Really Need." *—Richards*

SCENE IS NOW
Shotgun Wedding (cassette)
(Lost)

Some of you may have thought that Lost Records was gone and done for, but, Christ, were you wrong. Here we have, in a cassette-only format, the best release in the legendary legacy of TSIN and undoubtedly one of the finest, if not the finest, accomplishments of the Lost empire. I have listened to it four times in one day and found that it just keeps getting better with repeat listenings. There's something indescribable about the genuine appeal of Chris Nelson's warbly, off-key crooning and the band's lopsided, carnival-on-overdrive, multi-instrumental musical philosophy. When Nelson teams his pipes with the feminine charm of the Shams, Lianne Smith or Angel Dean, the result is absolutely nothing like the equation would leave you to believe. Mesmerizing stuff. Currently the official lineup of TSIN consists of only Chris and keyboardist Philip Dray, but the aid of Tony Maimone, Rusty Jones, and Will Rigby is immeasurable. One minute they've got spurs on ("Gone For A Long, Long Time"), the next minute Nelson thinks he's Tony Bennett ("Without A Song") and the next minute the boys are shopping in bodegas on the Lower East Side ("First Avenue"). Plus, you've gotta love Mofungo's non-political counterpart spitting out the lyric "There's politics in every song/Try and sing one that has no meaning," on the opening track, "If Justice Hides." Kids, it just doesn't get any better than this. *—Kevin Kraynick*

AAD
Demonstration (cassette)
(no label)

Four lengthy songs which are very techno-industrial, but different enough to be interesting. Repetitive beats, a particularly nice bassline on the first track. They don't seem to follow the usual formula as much as so many bands do these days—no real samples, per se, and the vocals aren't as prominent when they appear. *—Mason Jones*

AIN SOPH
Ain Soph (cassette)
(Staaltape/Soleilmoon)

This tape opens with choir-like sounds, introduces some nicely modulated male vocals, interjects dinky piano noodlings, moves on to nice classical material with operatic vocals (similar to recent Controlled Bleeding)... Overall I liked this, but it seems to go on too long and repeat itself. Play a side at a time, and it's just right. *—Mason Jones*

FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX
"Smart Ernest" b/w "Cupid's Retreat" & "Jay" (7")
(Collision Time)

Nothing fancy here. Just some to-the-point, catchy, garagey rock. "Smart Ernest" features decent guitar leads, a hopping bassline, and quick-wristed drumming; "Cupid" is brighter and poppier, with a neat drum sound and Allison's voice threatening to launch into a yodel; and "Jay" is another straightforward tune, about a cat and an ex-girlfriend. A likable single from these Michiganders.

photo: Billy Douglas

AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB

AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB
Everclear (cassette)
(Alias)

Mark Eitzel's world is bleak, despair his constant companion. But he approaches life dry-eyed, instead of wallowing in tears of self pity. And he expresses himself brilliantly, using simple words, whether gazing at a peacefully sleeping lover he feels unworthy of ("All I'm good for is to watch you sleep") or dealing with an unquenchable state of dissatisfaction ("I'm sick of drinking; so why am I so thirsty?"). While Eitzel contemplates his existence, Bruce Kaphan empathizes with minor guitar chords and shimmering pedal steel. And the whole band mirrors his swelling emotion on the uplifting "Rise." *Everclear* is a poignant slice of life. Don't miss it.

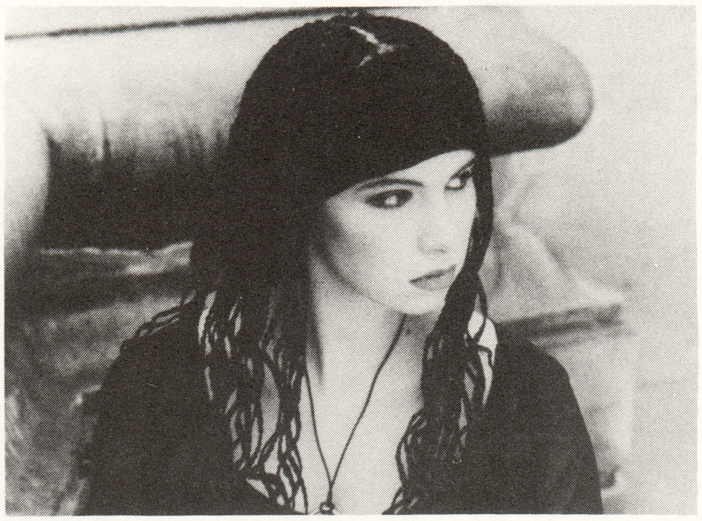
AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB
Rise (CD5)
(Alias)

Here's a bonus for those of you who own *Everclear*, a tease for those of you who don't. The title track is one of the best tunes from the album, while "Chanel #5" is a song of eloquent longing, and the acoustic version of "Crabwalk" gives the perkiest track from *Everclear* a somber, introspective air. And "The Right Thing" finds Mark Eitzel pondering life in a country bar, Bruce Kaphan's pedal steel whining away behind him. Four tunes for a chilly night with a half moon shining through the bare tree branches.

AND THE ANIMALS SCREAMED
Insane Torture Device (cassette)
(no label)
As the title might suggest, this is a tape of dense, steamrolling noise. There's a lot of texture here, rather than simply monotonous noise, and it's fairly complex. Rather than becoming boring, it manages to work its way into your head, where it rattles around and you end up hearing things which may or may not really be in the sound you're hearing. Doesn't matter, of course. Cool stuff. *—Mason Jones*

KERRI ANDERSON
Labyrinth (cassette)
(Impact)

Promising debut from this Canadian pop artist, as songs such as "Ghosts," "I Will Disappear," "Angel Says," "Where David Sleeps," and the album's title cut are deep and luxurious. The focus is on Anderson's voice; her personal tales are delivered with great feeling, buoyed by soft, diaphanous instrumental support. Ethereal, yes, but far more down to earth than your 4AD-type stuff. There are some more upbeat tunes, though these are not so successful. "Corner Of Life" is a bouncy throwaway, and "In The Night" has the exaggerated emotions of a Pat Benetar rocker. "Day By Day," however, is striking. Anderson's voice takes on a hard edge—she sounds almost like a different person. *Labyrinth* has a few dead ends, but this is pop with substance.



KERRI ANDERSON

ANGEL'IN HEAVY SYRUP
Angel'in Heavy Syrup (CD)
(Alchemy)

Half-an-hour of great, unusual stuff from this trio of Japanese women. Drop preconceptions based on Sekiri or, God forbid, Shonen Knife. These folks know how to play their instruments, and aren't afraid to tangle with lots of different styles. It starts off sounding a bit like A.C. Temple, with fuzzy atonal guitar, with a chorus of voices. Later they move into countryish music, sometimes a poppish sound, but never losing an intriguing edge. I fail to describe it adequately, but I'm unsure that's possible. Half-an-hour of uncategorizable, cool music. There. *—Mason Jones*

ANTENNA
Sway (CD)
(Mammoth)

One of the big problems with the CD is that people tend to want to fill it up with music, and 54 minutes of rather unspectacular indie guitar rock is just too much to bear. Of the 13 tunes penned by Blake Babies guitarist John Strohm on this side project, the opening cut is the strongest, with leads that slow like some hot, thick liquid and surprisingly driving drums from fellow Babe Freda Boner. Chirping organs, too. Some violin and piano add a touch of color to "Spinning Dreams" and "Weight Of The World," but *Sway* remains rather dry and flavorless. Finally, pop historians may get a kick out of "All I Need," with its Donna Summer and Madonna quotes. I don't..

ANTISEEN
Southern Hostility (LP)
(Rave)

Guitarist Joe Young gives you the finger on the album's cover (my, how anti-establishment!), but *Southern Hostility* contains burly lumberjack rock that's not half bad. "Death Train Comin'," "Kill The Business," and "Old Man, Hit The Road" are drunken, beer bottle smashin', blood drippin' tunes that have a deranged Meatmen-meet-Steppenwolf character. Sometimes the growly guitars and vocals get the band stuck in the mire, as on "Hate For Power," but this LP is pretty mean, noisy, etc., etc.

APOCALIPSTICK
Apocalipstick (CD)
(Incandescent)

This was pretty weak, but the Moon Festival album was worse—and this checks in at a heart-warming 18:45, too. If you can't keep it together while listening to an album that's under 20 minutes long, you shouldn't be a music critic. So an hour of my life is gone; chances are it would have been ill-spent anyway. Sort of bland rock and watery vocals (Syd Barrett-influenced? The man is spinning in his grave) offer brief moments of entertainment, some decent humor ("The Porpoise Song"), and the stunningly awful "Americano." Not as bad as the cover art, though. *—Richards*

ARCHITECT'S OFFICE
9th Year Gala Performance (cassette)
(Realization)

Interesting combinations of sound are always present on Architect's Office releases, with bits and pieces of sound—classical music quotes, spoken tidbits, and twiddling synths—coming and going, seemingly at random. "AO804.2" combines horn concerto fragments with Morse code and submarine and wind sounds. "AO84.3 (I..Chris)" borrows,

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seemingly, from a subliminal self-help tape ("I, Chris, am not a failure. I, Chris, am a total success"). It's intriguing the first time around, but gets very brainwashing upon repeated listenings. "AO804.5 (Apotheosis Of Josef Rheinberger)" and "AO804.7" are more daydreamy in nature, filling one's head with uneasy thoughts at one moment and calming images the next. But somehow, the net gain is zero, as a clear, lasting impression is not made. Nice color cover, though.

ARSON GARDEN
"Virtue Made Out Of Sticks" & "Metro" b/w "Shifting" (7")
(Community 3)

I just can't get into this band. Angular guitar pop, not without smarts, but having a brittle, eggshell-like feel. April Combs sounds a lot like Carly Simon. Yuck.

AUDIO SPORTS
3-6-9 (EP)
(Bron)

Starting with a parody of old Parliament album covers, Audio Sports let you know they don't take themselves seriously. This 3-track 12" single is a slow, pounding, screaming pseudo-funk-junk extravaganza pseudo-spinoff of the Boredoms, perhaps. Yeah, that's it. Imagine out-of-control squeal-rap vocals with a funky beat goin' on, and you're not sure whether to dance or run for cover. Your choice. *—Mason Jones*

AUTOCLAVE
"Go Far" & "It's Not Real Life" b/w "I'll Take You Down" (7")
(K/Dischord)

Interesting non-shimmer pop with mostly single-note guitar lines. Singer Mary Timony looks a lot like that Throwing Muses chick, but has an honestly good voice, like Marcy and Sue of Scrawl. The raw sensitivity of swaying numbers like "I'll Take You Down" is what lends Autoclave their power. Could these four girls be groomed to become the female Fugazi? (Production is credited to Brendan Canty.) I suppose time will tell. Bulletin: They broke up—oh, well. *—Manny Theiner*

B.O.X.
"There's Always Room For One More, Honey" b/w/ "Elephant" (7")
(Stamp)

Quirky, arty rock with a bottom-heavy pulse, like a cross between V-Effect and Skin Yard. The song "Elephant" has the refrain "I am the elephant/I remember everything," in which the vocals resemble Kate Bush. The flip side is more energetic, like Sonny Sharrock guitar lines over the bass and vocals of Slab. Not the usual fare, by any means, but no big standout, either. *—Manny Theiner*

BABES IN TOYLAND
To Mother (cassette)
(Twin Tone)

Yep, it's more scratch-your-eyes-out femrock, but the Babes are more competent instrumentally than most of the competition. And, here, "Catatonic" and "Spit To See The Shine" prove that Kat Bjelland can sing as well as yowl and shriek. Unfortunately, none of the seven songs on the EP really stick out, with the exception of "Laugh My Head Off," which starts off seductive and melodic, and then cranks up to a piercing climax.

BAGS
"L. Frank Baum" b/w "Max Roach" (7")
(Stanton Park)

Hopefully, this single was intended as a joke, 'cause the Bags pull out every heavy metal cliche in the book—exaggerated riffing, overblown solos, and histrionic vocals—on the way to making "L. Frank Baum" totally unlistenable. Naming a song after the famous jazz drummer gains them back a couple of yards, but it's 4th down, 27 to go.

photo: Joe Dilworth

BABES IN TOYLAND

BAND OF SUSANS
The Word And The Flesh (cassette)
(Restless)

The Susans are back with a vengeance on this one, with three flailing guitars contributing to a dense mass of noise, all but burying the vocals. What sets this band apart from the Jesus & Mary Chain or My Bloody Valentine, however, is the dynamic interaction of Robert Poss, Anne Husick, and Mark Lonergan. Their music is not just a distorted blur; upon examination, the fine detail emerges. *The Word And The Flesh* is also the most varied BOS album to date. "Now Is Now" is a pop-based song, "Sermon On Competition, Part 2" is marked by heavy riffing, and "Tilt" is dark and noisy. "Guitar Trio," a Rhys Chatham composition, is the album's coup de grace, filling the air with ringing harmonics, as it churns on and on. There are a couple of tunes here that don't really stand out, but *The Word And The Flesh* is a sterling effort that only gets stronger as it goes on.

JOHN BARTLES
Unknown Shit (cassette)
(Hypertonia)

As a great comic book character once said, "By the stars, this is grisly stuff." I don't think I could recommend this stark, angry, and often darkly comic tape to friends, but it sure is an interesting listen on a cold winter's night. It's a "best of" compilation, and I'm most partial to the tracks from *The End Of The Nuclear Age*, for it's these (including "E-Man's Dog" and "Top Knot Baby") that make the best use of a methodical, grinding beat and Bartles' acidic rasp. "V.A. Hospital" is similarly amusing in an unpleasant sort of way. The live material is, frankly, not noticeably different in sound from the studio stuff, but it's easy to imagine a fairly somber crowd at one of Bartles' shows. *—Richards*

JOHN BARTLES
No Motiff (cassette)
(no label)

Kind of a skimpy tape from Mr. Bartles (C-30, with two versions of one of the five songs), but when he's on target, he's tough to beat. "9 Mile 1" and "Iran & Iraq" show Bartles at his best, with his gruff Tom Waits-like vocals being placed against the top-notch sax work from Ethan Lyons and the jazzy rhythm section of Gary Holt and Jack Bosarge. "Ritual Killers" is a long jam out, recorded live. All three show Bartles' knack for spouting off on serious subjects, while keeping it entertainment rather than lecture. "Jiggle And Dance" exhibits his scatological side—often humorous, but generally not as memorable.

BEWITCHED
"409" b/w "Junket's Theme" (7")
(No. 6)

Somehow not as crunching as I thought it would be. "409" is an ominous tune, slow and grinding, but unfortunately it doesn't really go anywhere. "Junket's Theme" is boss, though, groove-oriented stuff with pounding percussion, waggling bassline, and decent turntable scratching—kind of like early PiL, but speeded up. Red vinyl.

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THE BLACK WATCH

BLACK WATCH
Flowering (CD)
(Doctor Dream)

I'm kind of a sucker for the violin, and J'Anna Jacoby's contributions to the Black Watch both lilt ("Terrific") and grate ("A Better Way"), and they're not there for novelty—they're a central piece of the group's music. And I really enjoyed this disc, a sort of dark, lovely/frosty alternative that most frequently reminded me of Echo And The Bunnymen, though I hate to limit this quartet. The best song is probably the jamming "Tear The Sky," with vocals that recall the Proclaimers and an angry kick that I would have welcomed on a few of the other songs. But I found myself liking warmer numbers like "Terrific" and "Not Forever Blue," too, and (strangely) the lion's share of the gentler love poems. Group vocalist, songwriter, and founder John Andrew Frederick has a good thing going here.
—Richards

BLUE
"Back Of My Nova" b/w "Bossy Woman" (7")
(ERL)

Scabby throat gargle vox creepin' over some sub-Butthole riffage or pre-Mudhoney tunelessness. Not catchy and not scary, but maybe some grunge-meister's cuppa tea.
—Lawrence Crane

BREADWINNER
" " b/w "Prescott (Homecut)" & "Mac's Oranges" (7")
(Merge)

Three songs, three guys...These instrumental rock workouts reminded me of Gone, with tempo shifts, and restrained and interesting lead work. There's just not enough hooks or interplay, or whatever it is that makes instrumental tracks like these work. (See Pell Mell!)
—Lawrence Crane

BULKHEAD
"Leaves In Virginia" b/w "12°" (7")
(Moist)

These guys are moving further and further away from Mission Of Burma, but they're one of the last from that school of Boston bands. Peter Ryan's vocals *do* sound a bit like Clint Conley's, Tom Devaney uses similar, odd-sounding guitar chords, and the band does have a nice balance to all its musical parts. But Bulkhead are brighter and more pop on "Leaves" and garagier on "12°." And though this single is above average, one can't help but long for the days when, during their live show, they used to rock with the best of them.

CALAMITY JANE
"Miss Hell" b/w "My Spit" (7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

More feline spit and yowl, as these Portland babes get closer and closer to paydirt. On "Miss Hell," the guitars'll put some hair on your eardrums, while the chugging rhythm section gets you rocking on your heels like a moron. On "My Spit," Gill Ann Hanner's clattering axework keeps things together despite drummer Lisa Koenig's so-what laxity. Boysenberry yogurt vinyl.

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CANDYLAND
Suck It And See (cassette)
(EastWest)

I was all set to pan these guys for sounding like Erasure clones, and I was intending to take great pleasure in being particularly brutal. But by the time I got to the end of the tape, I was having second thoughts. A few plays later, I think I have a bit better perspective. The opening song, "Precious," and those immediately following, are pretty irksome, with Felix Tod's annoying vocals being the primary sore spot. But then the band gets into a more introspective mode, reminding me of Talk Talk with the addition of a Beloved-like synth house beat. "Reternity," "Rainbow," and "Ivy To Oak" all have a delicious, icy groove that's quite alluring.

CAPTAIN CONDOMS
Kinda Kool (7" EP)
(Public Bath)

Four songs from what may be Japan's hottest band, and one certainly deserving big-time recognition. If you must compare, think of a bass-heavy Naked Raygun or a noisier, more chaotic Big Black. "Bed Bunny," "Good Speed You," and "Great Captain" send crashing guitars, hammering bass, explosive drumming, and harshed-out vox colliding together, but Captain Condoms manage to keep it all incredibly tight. "I.D." is slower and Stoogier. This stuff is just wicked.

CARNIVAL ART
Thrumdrone (CD)
(Beggars Banquet)

I thought you had to be from England to be on Beggars Banquet. These guys are from L.A.—and have a lot more fun than most bands on that label. Like writing weird pop songs about such "normal" things as neighbors, school yard bullies, and teachers. I hear echoes of the Pixies and Plasticland in all the repeated choruses and catchy guitar lines, but they never write as good a tune as the former, nor do they get as psych as the latter (except for a misguided take on Syd Barrett's "Octopus"). I think the general aura of goofiness and fun does save this, and, thankfully, not in a Dead Milkmen kinda way. *—Lawrence Crane*

photo: Martyn Strickland

CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE

CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE
30 Something (cassette)
(Chrysalis)

The Sex Pistols meet David Bowie (in his Ziggy Stardust phase) on this album, and the result is a most pleasant surprise from an album I had no great urge to play. *30 Something* is a bit grandiose at times, but the snarling punk lyrics and broad rises and falls in tempo set this apart from ordinary edgy rock, "My Second To Last Will And Testament," "Anytime Anyplace Anywhere," and "A Prince In A Pauper's Grave," were the sweeping triumvirate of rock, angst, and dramatic energy that won me over, and though the group seemed short of good ideas through most of the latter half of the tape, they'd already earned this critic's endorsement. Certainly the best new British band I've heard in a while. Pretty good stuff, really. *—Richards*

CATHERINE
"Sparkle" b/w "Charmed" (7")
(Limited Potential)

This single resembles the more contemplative side of Smashing Pumpkins, plus a sprinkling of 4AD stardust. "Sparkle" has swirling sandstorm guitars, with vocals that stay calm amidst the maelstrom, as the drumming pushes you through the binding fury at a leisurely pace. The B-side is dreamier, with drumming as Spartan as anything this side of Courtney Love. Fine stuff.

CELL
"Never Too High" b/w "Stratosphere" (7")
(Ecstatic Peace)

Both songtitles here suggest a state of being stoned, and, yep, it fits the music, too. "Never Too High" is my favorite of the pair; it pokes along at a measured pace and has dazed-sounding vocals and clenched-up drumwork. But the tripping guitar solos make the tune. "Stratosphere" is a bit more metallic, coming off like a fuzzier-headed Codeine.

CLAW HAMMER
Double Pac Whack Attack (2x7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

This attractive two-7" package, complete with artwork by Savage Pencil, came out awhile ago, but it's worth a mention for the red hot guitar assault on their cover of Ubu's "Final Solution." Guitarist Bagarozzi takes over the lead vocals from Jon Wahl and the results are quite nourishing. Didn't even miss Ravenstine's synth. The other three covers included are nowhere near as spellbinding as "Solution," but you've gotta give them a hand for tackling such non-obvious picks as Devo's "Gut Feeling" and the Fripp/Eno penned "Blank Frank." Top it off with some ravishing red-and-black-speckled vinyl and you've got yourself a family heirloom that will thrill and delight subsequent offspring for years to come.*—Kevin Kraynick*

CLAW HAMMER
Ramwhale (CD)
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

This band plays scuzzy-sounding hard rock with phlegm-clogged vocals, kind of like a bluesier Hullabaloo. Claw Hammer have the chops, but I'm not sure they deserve the attention they've received in the underground press. "Naked" has twisted heavy metal leads and thudding drums, and "Succotash" is catchier, with nimble drumming, blaring harmonica, and jazzy bass runs—it rocks killer. But while not many bands can infuse punk with Southern-fried boogie the way Claw Hammer do on "Sticky Thing" or "Three Fifteen," at five or six minutes a pop, these tunes deaden my nerves real quick.

CLAW HAMMER
Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Not Devo! (LP)
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

Hilarious concept, for this band to cover the entire first Devo album—especially the cover of a cover of "Satisfaction." Unfortunately, these beefy rockers have a tendency to bludgeon the original songs to death. I suppose I might enjoy this album more if I were a bigger fan of the Spudboys, but I find that the humor runs thin after three or four songs.

NELS CLINE TRIO
"Lady Speed Stick" b/w "Rumpus Room" & "Showbiz Casualty" (7")
(Forced Exposure)

Cline seems to be a graduate of the Thurston Moore/Rudolph Grey school of skidding, scraping guitar noise, but on these three songs, he operates clearly in a jazz context. And all three are tasty morsels featuring some rather open-ended drumming on a minimal drum kit by Michael Dietrich Preussner. "Lady Speed Stick" takes the listener through a tightly focused first stage, through the entropy of the middle section, and into a gracefully expansive closing passage. "Rumpus Room," by contrast, is guitar torture extreme enough to exorcise demons, and "Showbiz Casualty" is pretty easygoing, with a cleaner jazz guitar sound, and tensing just a touch from time to time in order to prevent you from getting *too* relaxed. Lots of action packed into one 45 rpm disc.

CLOCKHAMMER
Klinefelter (cassette)
(First Warning)

It's not hard to see why other rockers like Fugazi and Firehose have contacted Clockhammer to open when in the band's hometown of Nashville. Similarities to Living Colour are most evident in the group's hard sound, but elements of grunge metal and even jazz give Clockhammer a distinct appeal. Drummer Ken Coomer definitely sets the tone, and the fast numbers, like "Bluest Eyes" and "Drone," are the better ones. But the pounding "Standing By" and guitar-driven "Nullify" are great as well, and the gruff, rasping vocals are ideal for the music. Give a bit more of the grunge some flavor and I'd be completely sold. *—Richards*

CLOCKHAMMER
Carrot (CD5)
(First Warning)

There seems to be a certain duality about this band, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. "Standing By," from the *Klinefelter* LP, is marred by an awkward conflict between robust metal and brisk punk/pop. But "Lament," from the band's debut album, more effectively marries melifluous passages with kick-out-the-jams guitar rock, and the song has some nice, jazzy chord changes, too. Of the two bonus tracks, "Shadowplay" is a faithful rendition of the Joy Division tune, and "Mother Truth" is an O.K. metallic live number. Clockhammer could be a good one, provided they can integrate their different influences more convincingly.

JONNY COHEN
"Space Butterfly" b/w "I'm Not An Anorexic" & "Cats+Carp" (7")
(Teen Beat)

Another slightly off-beam release from Teen Beat. "Space Butterfly" has rather nonsensical lyrics, but its great blend of violin and acoustic guitar will have this one sticking in your head. "Anorexic" has nausea-inducing strings that make you feel downright queasy, and "Cats+Carp" has a Celtic folk-like feel. Not your average, boring rock & roll.

LLOYD COLE
Don't Get Weird On Me, Babe (CD)
(Capitol)

Every so often you'll see a Lloyd Cole review that slams him for having the nerve to write misogynistic songs, and Cole gives those critics more ammunition with "She's A Girl And I'm A Man" and a couple of other songs which are just a shade more serious than the average pop effort from Morrissey. But really, *Don't Get Weird On Me, Babe* isn't a terribly controversial or exciting album. Cole's got a great, pleasant voice, and the latter half of the album, composed of orchestral pieces arranged by Paul Buckmaster, includes some of the better songs he's done (particularly "Butterfly" and "Half Of Everything"). But the first six tunes, described accurately by Capitol as "popcraft," are almost entirely forgettable, and I'll take his moodier, far more entrancing first solo effort any day. *—Richards*

WANDA COLEMAN
Berserk On Hollywood Blvd (CD)
(New Alliance)

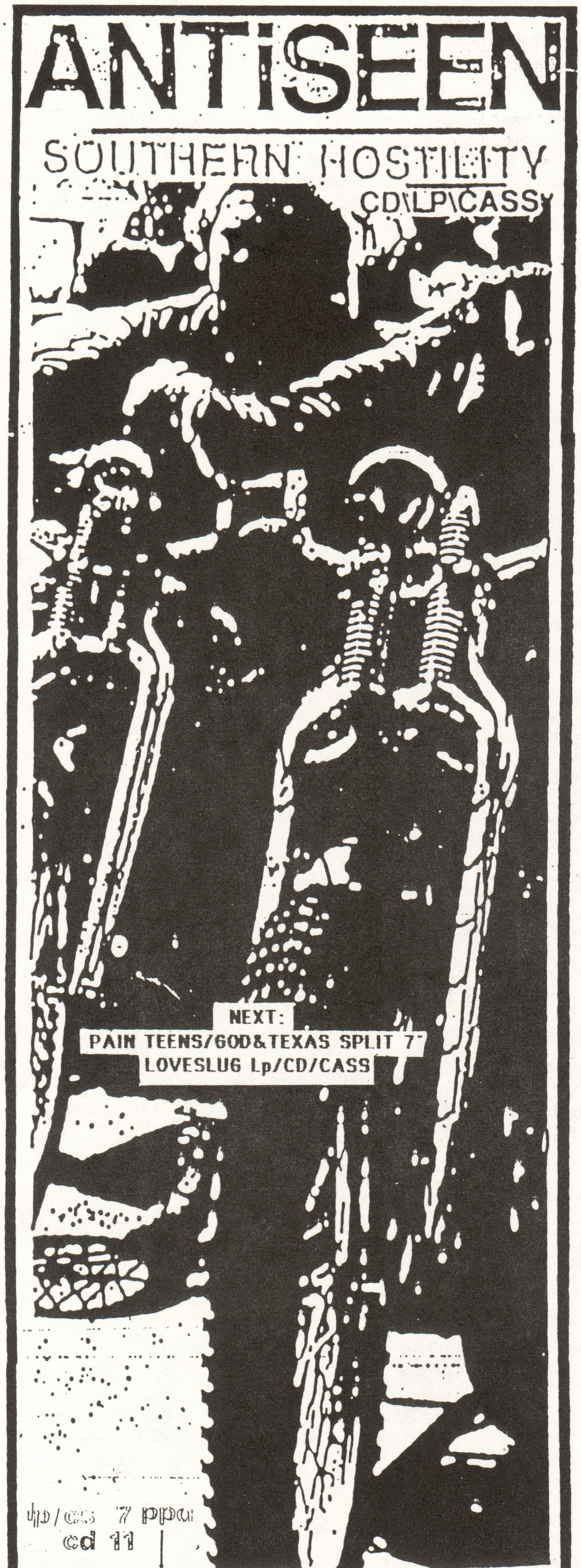
Spoken word albums seem to be an in thing right now, but I've got to say that I can't seem to get any enthusiasm worked up over them. I prefer my words either spoken to me live or lying there on paper, it seems. Coleman addresses some important stuff in all her work, but when I'm reading it myself I seem to embrace it more closely. Her delivery is strong and confident, making the rhythm of the words something alive, but here she's accompanied by Marv Evans on keyboards, which to me only serves to take the emphasis off her words themselves. This isn't always the case, of course. And her words are certainly strong enough to fight it out, but they shouldn't have to. Yes, there's some great material here which everyone should experience—about hunger, working, strife, death, and other topics. I'd recommend getting her books and swallowing the words whole instead of in this form. Fans of spoken word releases may not agree. *—Mason Jones*

COMMON AILMENTS OF MATURITY
"Long Fuse Jack"+3 (cassette)
(Unconscious Complex Management)

CAM have always relied more on energy and tension than hook and melody, so, with the intensity down a few notches, most of these songs never reach the catharsis level. And since the emphasis here seems to be mood rather than action, I would have liked to have seen less of a focus on Tim Robert's thin, biting guitar and somewhat strident vocals, and more weight on John Breglia's Chapman stick. "Machinery Turning" is a winner, though, as Larry Dersch speeds up the repetitive whack on his drumkit and Tim's guitar gets coiled up like tangled fishing line.

CORAL
"Filling A Hole" b/w "Your Reward" & "Snow" (7")
(Merge)

Great single here by Robert Schick's new band, he formerly of Honor Role. "Filling A Hole" teams Dischord intensity with K casualness. Schick tries to "sing" a little more—somewhat unsuccessfully, I might add—but he's got the kind of voice that makes you hafta listen. "Your Reward" and "Snow" have guitars that are thin and hover in the background, but are nevertheless powerfully abrasive. The drummer (uncredited here) finds new ways of doing things, just when you figured it had all been done before, easing out of amazingly quick rolls into brief moments of calm on "Reward" and pulling the strings tight on "Snow." A band worth keeping an eye on.



COURTNEY LOVE
"Highlights" b/w "Shanko" & "Disappearing Lessons" (7")
(K)

When I was a kid, I always liked Goofus, with his jaunty grin, way more than that twerp Gallant, but I adore "Highlights," a quiet love song about a mismatched couple. I can't explain it, but I'm drawn right in by Courtney Love's delicate guitar strumming and bare-bones drumwork, as especially by Lois Maffeo's casual, unassuming vocal style. And two more winners on the flip side rank this right alongside Beat Happening, the Vaselines, or any like-minded combo you'd care to name.

CRACKERBASH
Holiday (7" EP)
(Imp)

Solidest single on Imp, so far. "Walk Back" features distorted Butthole vocals, grinding guitars, and burly drum pounding. The title cut is the catchiest here, with a brighter guitar sound and Bob Mould-like vocals. And "All Work" closes the record with a more easygoing instrumental. No complaints here.

CRAWLING WITH TARTS
AA Redbox Pahoehoe (cassette)
(ASP)

CWT are back with some more sound excursions. This time around I got some little crunching noises, some sound loops, many bell-like sounds, occasional rhythmic tappings, and a fair amount of woodwind instrumentation—clarinet, I believe. At times, the combination of rhythmic sounds and the woodwind made this sound quite Moroccan, which was a hit with me, anyway. A bit sparse, and perhaps a bit longer than I like, but quite well done. *—Mason Jones*

CRAYON
"Matchbox" b/w "Another King Of The World" & "Green Stamp" (7")
(Harriet)

It's dangerous when a band's appeal is their naivete, 'cause bands grow up as sure as people do. This Washington-state trio have already matured far behind their *Cartwheel For A Kiss* cassette, so catch these guys now. "King Of The World" is my pick here. It's got clattering one-chord guitar and rather flat singing, but the lively drumming and fun, basement spirit keep things going. "Green Stamp" is a silly, but catchy ditty whose riff borrows from Lou Reed, and I don't really like "Matchbox" too well. Hey, guys, don't forget your lunchbox...

DAGGERS
"Kiss That Girl" b/w "The Kids Are Alright" (7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

Funny little trio from Norway mining some Toy Dolls/Ramones territory. Goddamn weird-as-hell accent, but the stuff's all fun. I still can't understand any reason to do a Who cover. *—Lawrence Crane*

DAS NEANDERTHRALL
Das Neanderthrall (cassette)
(Tiger Epoxy)

Taking up where its predecessor left off, Das Neanderthrall start with Bad God's aggressive, Minutemen-like post-punk and take things in an even jazzier direction. The results, however, are mixed. "Symbol Abuse" is hard-hitting, with biting guitars and fine drumming, while "Maggot Brain Paradigm" has a darker, more nocturnal feel, with guitarwork that fits into the Bill Frisell/David Torn tradition. Other tracks are less successful, "Mess" being hard to untangle and best being swept under the rug, and "Faceless Men With Sandwiches" being a wandering piano-based composition with mumbled old recordings on the supposed differences between the races. But Das Neanderthrall are a relatively new outfit, and I'm confident they'll turn out some more consistent efforts in the future.

DATURA SEEDS
"S&P '69" b/w "D.A. Pop" (7")
(Toxic Shock)

Zesty stuff here. "S&P '69" starts off with clean, Aztec Camera-like strumming that gets buried in garagey riffing. The resilient drum pounding keeps things moving, and the vocals are flawless. "D.A. Pop" is bright-toned rock & roll that's not as catchy as the A-side, but every bit as energetic.

DEAD C
"Power" b/w "Mighty" & "Peace" (7")
(Forced Exposure)

I have a hard time thinking of Dead C as a singles band. On this 7", licensed from New

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Zealand's Xpressway label, "Power" is a cloudy song of lo-fi angst, droning guitars, and slapping drums. On "Mighty," the band threatens to stumble and fall, but somehow keeps driving relentlessly onward. O.K. stuff, but I'm not sure if it justifies all the talk about these guys.

DEADSPOT

DEADSPOT
Built-In Pain (LP)
(C/Z)

These guys have apparently been kicking around Philly awhile, but this is the first I've heard of them. Deadspot take hardcore constructions and scuff 'em up a little. They rock hard, yet remain airtight, guitars blasting and vox pushed to the limit. The "in" side is nearly flawless, "Razors" being especially brilliant—thanks to some catchy drumming. The "out" side doesn't quite reach the same plateau, generally being slower and more metallic.

DELERIUM
Euphoric (CD)
(Third Mind)

Impressive disc from this Frontline Assembly spin-off, blowing away its other side project, the bloated (though sonically pleasing) Will. The title cut features choral samples over an ever-changing industrial dance beat, and "Decade" possesses more driving rhythms under austere synth lines. But the real beauty here comes in the disc's two long final cuts. "Grave Mentor" is a 14-minute elegy for a stormy night, with Gregorian chants and ominous reverberations. "Sorrow" is equally funereal, with half-heard murmurs and dark, billowing synths. Bewitching stuff.

DENTISTS
Naked (10" EP)
(Independent Project)

These Brits have virtually ignored in the States, and I still can't figure out if I should regret this or not. Recorded between 1984 and 1987, these demos feature jangly guitars, crooning vox, and super-sloppy drumming. Like the Smiths, the Dentists can somehow lure me in one moment and repulse me the next, and the title cut does indeed remind me of Morrissey and crew. "We Thought We'd Got To Heaven" and "Streets & Houses" are not bad, but still...

DIVINE WEEKS
Never Get Used To It (CD)
(First Warning)

On what appears to be their second album, this L.A.-based band delivers a hard-rockin', Southern-style, putrid little mess. Somehow, they've become enmeshed in some sub-Black Crowes mush-land, bleating out the most painful of dumb lyrics amid a lot of psuedo-emotional build-ups and grand riffing. I'd rather listen to John Cougar Mellencamp, and I don't like John Cougar Mellencamp. —*Lawrence Crane*

DOG FACED HERMANS
"Too Much For The Red Ticker" (7")
(Project A Bomb)

This combo from Amsterdam shares some aesthetic similarities with their buddies the Ex, but their approach is somewhat more poetic and certainly more subtle. Moments of "Too Much For The Red Ticker," dare I say it, sound at times like what the B-52's would

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in a perfect world. The Herman's music has an elegant quality to it that drapes over the odd-ball beat like a tailored suit. Good and strange, and if their live show is anything close to what the Ex puts on, it's free dental care for everyone.—*Kevin Kraynick*

DON'T MEAN MAYBE
Real Good Life (CD)
(Doctor Dream)

DMM seem a bit more comfortable with themselves now that they've stopped trying to be the Minutemen. They've softened their hard, jarring approach, adopting a poppier sound, as on "Fake ID," with its melodic guitar hooks. But the predominant feel here is roots-plus-punk—or CCR-meets-the-Meat Puppets—on tunes like "Hot Smoke And Sassafras," "Cancel," and "Slight Pieces." The Californians have mellowed as they've matured, but 14 songs in 36 minutes ain't anything to sneeze at, either.

DOWSER
√964 Soundtracks (CD)
(Bron)

Eerie, edgy sounds and rhythms, sounding like it's very late at night and something's going on that's not necessarily good news. Great keyboard and noise work; you never know what's going to happen next. Far from being ambient as is usually the case for soundtracks, these tracks definitely have lives of their own. If these are actually pieces from actual soundtracks, I'd love to see the films themselves. Great stuff. —*Mason Jones*

DREAD FLIMSTONE & THE MODERN TONE AGE FAMILY
From The Ghetto (cassette)
(Scotti Brothers)

Rap and reggae have been getting closer and closer these days, but I'd much rather listen to Dread Flimstone than I would Shabba Ranks. "From The Ghetto" and "Into U" sport some mean scratching, hip-hop and Soul II Soul beats, and rasta vocals from Jah-T; "Sitting" and "Slackness" are more reggae, but in a warm, easy lovers-rock style; and "Tribute" and "Fantasy" have some jazzy, Herbie Hancock-like keyboard stylings. It's a pity Flimstone adopted such a stupid moniker. I was half expecting another Dread Zeppelin joke band, but this is real music. Good, too.

DROP ACID
Making God Smile (CD)
(Restless)

Minor Threat meet Mudhoney meet Stone Roses on this project spearheaded by Kevin Seconds, "Reunion" and "Choke" combine a melodic roar with syncopated drumming, but this album is largely unmemorable.

RICHARD DRISKELL & CHUCK GREENLAND
Source Of Uncertainty (cassette)
(Corpqi)

Live, improvised sounds recorded in 1982—quite some time ago. That does explain a little bit, because what we've got here is certainly nothing new these days: analog synth bleeps, waves, sound washes, and buzzings. Unfortunately, it was released now, when the genre has become a bit redundant. Fans of the sound may want to check this out, but there are a lot of similar tapes available and this one has nothing to recommend it over the others. —*Mason Jones*

DROWNING BREATHING
Schiz (cassette)
(Audiofile)

Michael Pittard continues his evolution away from his more atmospheric tapes, with mixed results. "Lovely" and "Razor Blocks" represent my least favorite side of the Drowning Breathing, scraping guitar feedback and beatbox music, with dreary vocals that are not much more than a murmur. "Skinny" and "I Cannot Feel" are a bit more interesting, reminiscent of Bauhaus. But I thoroughly enjoyed side two, as Pittard cuts out most of the guitar and concentrates on electronics. "I Don't Care" is mostly beat, reminding me of New Order's "Confusion"; "Eyeing Those Buildings," I think, does have guitar, but heavily clouded in effects; "A Horrible Accident" adds rhythms to the synth/tape textures Pittard is truly a master of; and "Fear Becomes You" makes nice use of chant-like sighs.

DRUNKEN BOAT
Drunken Boat (CD)
(First Warning)

I was pretty impressed by a Drunken Boat demo a couple of years ago, but I didn't expect to be blown away by this disc quite the way I was. "Tragic Hands" is terse and straining in the spirit of early Gang Of Four, with clipped, brittle guitar strumming and vocals that sound like they're delivered with fists clenched. (Todd Colby's voice is far from pretty, reminding me of Rocky from Rocky & Bullwinkle, at times.) "New Pop" revs it up, fairly brimming with fuzzed-out energy, sending me tripping and stumbling around the living room, knocking over furniture. "Accidents" is a snippet of dreamy dissonance that says more in 1:26 than most bands do in half an hour. The toned down strums of Steve Gross and Todd Serbousek sound like Scrawl meets Band Of Susans, tension waxing and waning, but never exploding out of its seams. "Skull Crusher" and "Jubilee" are fine slabs of post-Burma punk/pop, "Pony" is scrawny, white-boy blues, and the disc ends with a pretty fair cover of Husker's "What's Going On." Tons of bands are louder than Drunken Boat, but few are more powerful.

[editor's note: Kevin hates this album...]

DRUNKEN BOAT
New Pop (CD5)
(First Warning)

There's a new Drunken Boat rhythm section on this EP, and a sound that feels a bit more cluttered than on their debut album, but *New Pop* is another winner from this NYC-based band. The title track is the bristling pop number from their exquisite debut, but the other four are brand new recordings, not just remixes or leftovers. "Shut Up" is jabbing funk/blues, and "Hogwash" has Todd Colby babbling against the uniform, repeated pounding of the rest of the band. "Rabbit" begins with clamoring guitars, then gradually brings things down to a moodier level, and "Salad Days" continues in that tone, adding a bit of muted trumpet, to boot.

DUE PROCESS
RRRadio 53 (cassette)
(Realization)

More noisy radio collage from Lowell, with the participants this time around including Ron, HNAS, Mission Papua Holland, Korm Plastics, Christophe Brocqua, and others. Basically, we get tons of unusual noises and strange sounds stirred up into a long audio soup. There's no telling what you may hear next, so it does occasionally seem a bit random, but in general I get the sense that there are patterns. Possibly I just heard my own patterns, and indeed there was no thought put into it. If so, I don't care, because it's a fun listen. —*Mason Jones*

JOHN DUNCAN
Klaar (CD)
(Extreme)

An extreme performance artist who's been known to fuck corpses on stage, Duncan has done several recordings involving droney, ambient, and environmental sounds similar to the Hafler Trio. And, like Andrew MacKenzie, he's a man of writings—some of his observations and theories on the human condition are contained on the booklet here. As for the music, there's the lo-tech drones and crackling, with rising and falling noises on "Delta" and "Immense Room," and the centerpiece, "Klaar," breaks down into several sections of radio noise, Buddhist chants, dada voice cutups, gunfire, and more intense drones. Interesting enough, though I think John Duncan live would probably be superior. —*Manny Theiner*

DYLANS
Godlike (EP)
(Beggars Banquet)

I loved the Scratch & Sniff lemon, but since I'm not a big fan of rather whiny, cloying vocals—in chorus, no less—and fairly undramatic guitar playing, I really don't have a lot else good to say about this. The press kit calls these "jingle-jangle power-pop" songs, and they're 75 percent correct. "My Hands Are Tied" is sort of pretty, but then the "Lemon Afteregg Mix," which becomes tedious very quickly, hurls me back into a sour mood. It seems every issue I get a recording from a group which has gotten enough positive attention that it's striking how little I can stand them. —*Richards*

EDGAR SCHWARTZ
Edgar Schwartz (cassette)
(no label)

This tape is listed under "E" 'cause Edgar Schwartz is not a person, but a duo of James Nicholson and Dennis Steinseifer. What they've tried to do is emulate the great producers of the '60s, creating sophisticated pop works on primitive equipment, ping-ponging tracks on a 4-track reel-to-reel. And as a studio exercise, this is a rousing success, as the pair weave guitars, piano, string sounds, harmonica, tape effects, and multipart vocals into a rich tapestry. Unfortunately, the tunes themselves are lightweight (sometimes campy) knockoffs of Beach Boys tunes, etc. "Baby's Gone Bye Bye" is about the only tune here I'd voluntarily listen to again.

EGGS
"Skyscraper" b/w "Ocelot" (7")
(Teen Beat)

Cool stuff here, jangly guitar over muted trumpet strains, with casual drumming and

unschooled, but heartfelt vocals. "Skyscraper" is especially effective, building up to a couple of subtle peaks, before fading away again. "Ocelot" doesn't quite have the same highs. Sunnyside yellow label on white vinyl.

ERECTUS MONOTONE
Cathode Gumshoe (7" EP)
(Merge)

Second single of North Carolina bored-youth, raucous power pop that's somewhat freer and sloppier—and less obviously catchy—than previous Superchunk, not to mention the female vocals here. Can't complain, with five pretty decent tunes crammed onto a small-size 33. I like "Stumble" for the S. Youth references and "The Day The Sharks Flew" for oblique lyrical content. A fun band, to be sure. *—Manny Theiner*

photo: Richard Haughton

EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL

EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL
Worldwide (CD)
(Atlantic)

Having been a fan of both Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt back in the early '80s, reviewing this album was like getting reacquainted with some old friends years later—after they've found fame and done big things—and you find, to your relief, that they're still the same people you loved way back when. Sure, EBTG are a lot more polished and glossy than they were in the olden days, but on these 11 songs, they're as warm and personal as ever, telling takes about life and about love. "Old Friends," "You Lift Me Up," and "One Place" are stylish tunes, full of depth and feeling, with Tracey's rich, velvety vocals and Ben's tasteful piano-based arrangements. O.K., if they're not your friends, maybe you could care less, but I dig this album.

MAJEK FASHEK
Spirit Of Love (cassette)
(Interscope)

The third album by this Nigerian vocalist comes across as decent, but lacking in grit. Little Steven provides an over-polished production job on Majek's Bob Marley/King Sunny Ade-gone-pop hybrid. The songs are played well, but seem to cover typical reggae bases, Jah Love, etc...Not very inspired or inspiring. *—Lawrence Crane*

FEAR OF FALLING
"Faith" (CD-5)
(SOH)

A couple of pretty lean songs that sound almost like they're still being worked on by their performers. A clear male voice and somewhat slow (tentative?) instruments produce a couple of janglers that would sound okay on the radio, but as to whether I'm going to be interested in anything full-length from the group, let's just say that if you're only going to present 6:44 of music, it should probably do more to grab the attention. *—Richards*

FIRE IN THE KITCHEN
"Simple English" b/w "Cold Rain And Snow" (7")
(Ajax)

I guess I'm not *too* surprised, but I'm on the verge of turning into a FITK fan. A-side sounds like the Feelies, but more jarring. Robert Dennis' drumming drives the song this way and that, while the catchy chorus keeps things stable. Add it to the list of songs that I've woken up singing in the morning. The flip is a brief, folksy gem that just has a real spirit to it. This 45 is one of life's simple pleasures.

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FISH & ROSES
"Monks Hate You" b/w "Robin Hood 4" (7")
(Ajax)

This single has little of what generally makes Fish & Roses so winsome—the way Sue Garner's melt-a-heart-of-stone vocals contrast with the band's joggly instrumental style. The most notable component on these two songs is Dave Sutter's organ, which drapes itself over the quirky Zoogz Rift-like "Monks Hate You" and the short, but tense "Robin Hood 4." Not an average single, but not particularly endearing either.

FIVE THIRTY
Bed (CD)
(Atco)

So they don't come from Manchester or bury the listener in '60s influences. What they do instead is play decent British pop with occasional dark ("Automatons") or funky ("13th Disciple") moments, and offer a number of clever hooks ("Strange Kind of Urgency") and wordplays ("Womb With A View"). Nevertheless, at its center, *Bed* is no more affecting than the vast majority of what is trying to be passed off as the efforts of the next great British band. I can't say that I didn't enjoy this disc, but I also can't shake the feeling that I've heard it all before. *—Richards*

FLOORS
"Another Fool" b/w "Someday (You Might Need Love") (7")
(Bar None)

Enjoyable, if somewhat enigmatic, single by a band led by some Irish guy David Donohue. "Another Fool" is easygoing strum rock with melty organ chords and squiggly sax. There's also backing vocals with a bit of Breeders-like grate (and B-52's quotes) from Maria McKee and Tania D'lleo. The flip is harder hitting, with choppy rhythms, grinding guitars, and wobbly keys. Tough to pin this band down in just two songs, but I'm listenin'.

FLYING SAUCER
"Real"+3 (7" EP)
(Teen Beat)

Simple, jangly pop, with the throaty crooner voice of Yasmin, who books NTC's Spiral club and who sounds like a cross between Chrissie Hynde and that Throwing Muses chick. Yet another love-rock 7" to hit an indie scene already glutted with such efforts. But if you like Love Child, Galaxie 500, and Courtney Love, then you'll have little problem liking this. *—Manny Theiner*

LAURIE FREELOVE
Smells Like Truth (cassette)
(Ensign)

I have mixed feelings about this album. Freelove's voice is almost painfully scratchy—even more son than Marianne Faithfull's—and its strong character over powers the icy, atmospheric pop backing. Fortunately, Freelove is a strong songwriter, penning eloquent tunes that are pensive, but powerfully expressive. Textural guitars, wispy synths, and a bit of lonely piano bring to mind Bel Canto, and many tracks have no drums or percussion at all. "Eyes" is particularly bleak, with whispered backing vocals and the distant howl of the winter wind. This album has been growing on me as I become accustomed to Laurie's voice.

FUDGE TUNNEL
Hate Songs In E Minor (CD)
(Relativity)

Hate is right, as that emotion permeates this album, from Alex Newport's spiteful vocals to Adrian Parkin's severe, controlled drum pounding. "Hate Song" is thick, sludgy goo, laced with heavy metals, while "Bed Crumbs" totally rocks, barreling through the crowd, fists swinging this way and that. "Spanish Fly" is slow and menacing, with wrenching guitar leads, and "Soap And Water" has mean-spirited riffing that tears through a dense smog of guitar noise. This album is over the limit in terms of covers—the normal rule being one per customer—but "Sunshine Of Your Love" and "Cat Scratch Fever" are heavy-duty renditions that stand up to the originals. Killer stuff.

FUGAZI
Steady Diet Of Nothing (LP)
(Dischord)

Make no mistake about it, these guys are back full-force, with an album that's less overtly punk, but more consistent than *Repeater.* Musically, *Steady Diet* follows the less-is-more philosophy of Honor Role, as the guitar riffing parts to expose bare drumming on "Stacks" and "Polish." And even when Fugazi cook, as with the frayed guitar noise of the title cut, drummer Brendan Canty holds something back—but from a position of strength, not weakness. And vocally, the team of Ian MacKaye and Guy Picciotto is as powerful as ever. Other standouts include "Reclamation" and "Runaway Return," but there's not a weak cut in the lot. On their latest, Fugazi cement their position at the top of the heap.

GADGET
Gnashing Of Teeth (cassette)
(Corpqii)

Another attempt at a Christian industrial band, except this is *no joke.* It's the second tape by some guy in Youngstown, OH, with too many synths and effects units. Maybe he listened to too many Wax Trax records, yet was unable to shirk his fundamentalist Christian upbringing. Anyway, here's the rundown: sample of baby crying, cheezy drum machines, spacey electronic bleeping, imitation of *Twitch*-era Ministry, reading of the Lord's Prayer and psalms over backgrounds intended to be ominous, but actually ending up rather flat. On "The Plea," he says, "Sometimes I feel so worthless, so useless." You said it, now why don't you go back and listen to some early Current 93 or Whitehouse and leave us alone with this Christian bullshit. *—Manny Theiner*

GANGWAY
The Antenna Man Chronicles (CD)
(Roadska)

Light, boppy tunes that combine '60s pop, '50s rock & roll, and just a hint of '80s skinny-tie new wave. "No More Mr. Nice Guy," "Coat Pocket," and Eddie Cochran's "20 Flight Rock" are energetic and reasonably tight, but Gangway's version of Otis Redding's "These Arms Of Mine" is sanitized rather than soulful, and "My Side Of The Story" and "Lesson Learned" are way too smiley and insubstantial, with totally bland vocals. This is the type of squeaky clean band you might imagine playing at a pre-Woodstock prom night.

GENBAKU ONANIES
Forward Command Post (7" EP)
(Public Bath)

Punk rock as in the Ramones meet early Gang Green—served up Japanese style, of course. The four songs here are raw in sound, but somehow lack a certain abandon; the guitar solos cut, yet seem almost blase. Kinda curious.

GLASS EYE
"Rock Of Hand" b/w "Satellite Of Love" (7")
(Bar None)

The A-side is more a story than a song, one that brings back memories of my childhood—except it was *my* hand the big ol' rock ended up crushing. I'll show you the scar sometime. The B-side is kind of a throwaway Lou Reed cover (as if there's any other kind). Green jello vinyl.

photo: Peter Byrne

GOD'S LITTLE MONKEYS

GOD'S LITTLE MONKEYS
Lip (cassette)
(Alias)

Licensed from Cooking Vinyl, U.K., this English combo lays down a pleasant, folky, rockin' sort of groove. The male and female vocals are pleasant, too, and give us a nice dose of liberal/cynical world view, without exactly clobbering the old noggin. This music might fall somewhere in the Mekons/Walkabouts land, except for their cover of "Ball Of Confusion," a techno-folkish mistake, if you ask me. In all, very much a "pleasant" surprise. *—Lawrence Crane*

GODFLESH
Slavestate (cassette)
(Relativity)

Another solid effort from these guys, with the expected industrial-strength guitars, harsh vocals, and pounding beat. "Slavestate," here in several forms, including a dancey radio mix, is hard-hitting stuff that reminds me of early Killing Joke. "Perfect Skin" is dark and more atmospheric, and "Slateman" and "Wound '91" are slow and grinding, with barbed-wire guitar that keeps the songs from getting overbearing. Solid work, all the way through.

GOLDEN PALOMINOS
Drunk With Passion (cassette)
(Charisma)

On their latest album, Anton Fier and cohorts opt for mostly long, introspective songs, dominated by the ethereal keyboards and vocals of Amanda Kramer. Her "The Haunting" is the album's centerpiece—dreamy, but anchored by some beautiful, but somber guitarwork from Richard Thompson. And "A Sigh" is similar, but with bleaker, lonelier six- and twelve-string playing from Nicky Skopelitis. Bob Kidney's closer, "Begin To Return," is gentle and oceanic, but the songs with Bob Mould and Michael Stipe (his cut's not quite up to "Boy Go," from the Pals' second LP) aren't too involving. And, as a whole, the album is more aloof than passionate. *Drunk* is gorgeous in terms of sound and production, but uneven in terms of substance.

GOOSEWIND
Manny Mota (cassette)
(Shrimper)

This tape is labeled a "work in progress," but like a sketch or even a doodle can provoke the emotions, so can an unfinished audio work. The A-side begins with eerie, sparse droning, which swells into a jumble of drumming, humming, and strumming, then dissolves into a tangle of voices and sounds, shrouded and indistinct, as if from a distant memory. Just too cool. I didn't like the B-side quite so much, louder and more mindwarping, with garbled vocal clips.

GREEN MAGNET SCHOOL
"White People" b/w "Ammonia Bath" (7")
(Sonic Bubblegum)

These guys got screwed over by the Rough Trade collapse, so their album never came out. But I still think this Boston band is going to be big. "White People" is proof that three guitars and a lot of drum bashing doesn't have to all sound the same; this tune is way catchy and way rockin'. On "Ammonia Bath," a delicate piano intro gets blown away by slow, churning guitar noise and clanking drums. It's a pretty ugly morass of sound, but just when you think it's beginning to bog down, the piano chords come crashing through, bringing the song to finality. LP due out by the time you read this, on Sub Pop, and I'm licking my chops already.

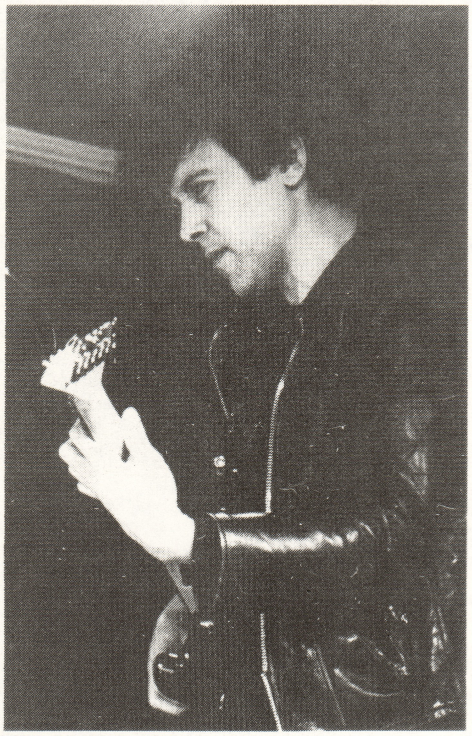
photo: Catherine Ceresole Bachmann

RUDOLPH GREY

RUDOLPH GREY
Mask Of Light (CD)
(New Alliance)

NYC guitarist, of late-'70s jazz-rockers Red Transistor, melds Lower East Side noizrock and Euro-free jazz brilliantly on this second disc, with no small help from Borbetomagus sax maniac Jim Sauter and ex-Coltrane drummer Rashid Ali. Love Child guitarist Alan Licht leaves his melodic noodling on "Flaming Angels." This Thurston Moore-produced monster is almost as powerful as Borbeto itself, and just as neglected and overlooked—Grey should logically be placed in the avant-pantheon, right alongside Zorn, Sharp, and Sharrock. Don't you dare make the mistake of ignoring this. *—Manny Theiner*

HAFLER TRIO
Kill The King (CD)
(Silent)

A very nice package here, with the CD in a little sleeve slid into a folder with a booklet. Yeah, you can't put it on your shelves properly, but them's the breaks. We begin our 73-minute journey with some distorted spoken words, then move quickly into the familiar Trio vocabulary of drawn-out tones and rumbling, nearly-subliminal sounds, splashing water, reverberating voices, and the like. The booklet has what seem to be short stream-of-consciousness pieces for each segment on the CD (though it's all one track as far as my CD player's concerned). I don't necessarily consider this anything new for the Trio, but those who enjoy their sonic experiments will welcome this one, too. *—Mason Jones*

HALO OF FLIES
Music For Insect Minds (CD)
(Amphetamine Reptile)

As expected, a comprehensive CD-only compilation of strong-headed Haloisms (only a few things appear to be missing). Perhaps their rage pisses out its own fire over the course of a collection this long, but the blaze gets pretty goddamned impressive at times. Plus I can repeatedly listen to their cover of "How Does It Feel To Feel" (my politically incorrect favorite Halo tune) a lot easier on CD than on the 7". Full throttle bastard boogie...26 tracks strong. If you haven't, you might as well.*—Kevin Kraynick*

HAMAS
1948 (cassette)
(Divided)

More Nazi imagery—the title, and the concentration camp photo on the cover. Yawn. The

music, however, isn't bad at all. Starting off with rather ambient droning, it slowly changes and moves into more destructive, active noises. It doesn't develop very much, but it's not bad overall. *—Mason Jones*

HANDS TO
Eurean Recant (cassette)
(BBP)

Colorado industrial musician Jeph Jerman has been cranking out these Hands To tapes for years. Each one is a combination of power electronics and Haters-style destroyed music. Within each piece, you may think you hear a babbling brook, a jabbering crowd, and airplane flying overhead, or factory robots run amok. The sounds blend into a fantastic wall of noise that rumbles your low-end speakers and stands as a remarkable soundtrack to the post-industrial mindset. Feel the power. *—Manny Theiner*

HAPPY MONDAYS
The Peel Sessions (CD)
(Strange Fruit/Dutch East India)

I was never much of a Happy Mondays fan, but fortunately, these four tunes date from 1986, well before the days of the Madchester experience. On "Kuff Dam," "Freaky Dancin'," "Olive Oil," and "Cob 20," the group has more in common with A Certain Ratio than the Stone Roses—not particularly catchy, but possessing a light, gyrating groove.

HARDVARK

HARDVARK
The Gentle Ben L.P. (cassette)
(no label)

Nothing all that different here, just solid rock & roll. Hardvark have a roaring, Sub Poppy sound, but not as punk—and with a stronger sense of melody. Randy Towner is definitely the focal point of "Rush Ride" and "Door." He contributes the yalping vocals and cranks out some buzzing guitarwork to go along with his own acoustic strumming. Ed Giles' bass is ample and melodic, Jim Kelly's stickwork is sharp, but not overdone, and the trio setting lets everything ring loud and full. A few songs come and go without grabbing your attention, but "Bar Down" and "Ukelele" are two more driving rock tunes. Hardvark may be a bit mainstream for some, but at least they're not your basic indie clone-rockers.

JOHN & JAMIE HARTFORD
Hartford & Hartford
(Flying Fish)

Country musicians are traditionally a bunch of whiners. "My wife left me...," "I'm stuck in the bottle again...," "I'm a low-down dog...," etc. John Hartford is a whiner, too. And a fine one, at that. He started off his career on the folksy side, worked his way up to the stoned bluegrass lunacy of LPs like *Nobody Knows What You Do* and *All In The Name Of Love* (penning the country classic "Gentle On My Mind" along the way), and then vanished on a steamboat for awhile, returning with an almost ludicrous obsession with the Mississippi. These days he's studying the concept of love from every possible angle and, through his selection of covers and his own songs, you'd have to assume he's slightly disgusted with the whole affair. On this disc he's joined by his son Jamie, who's no slack on the mandolin and possesses an intriguing deep, hollowed-out voice that compliments his father's nasally yelp nicely. I find myself listening to this quite a bit lately. Bluegrass's consummate showman has made a dandy comeback. Straw hats and corn cob pipes for the whole bunch of you whippersnappers. Pronto. *—Kevin Kraynick*

photo: David Conklin

HEAD CANDY

HEAD CANDY
Starcaster (CD)
(Link)

Unpolished vocals and melodic guitar roar characterize this Iowa supa-group, of sorts. Jim Viner's drumming stabilizes the band, rather than driving it forward, but the dual axes of Mike Sangster and Doug Roberson have enough thrust to keep the tunes rocketing into the night. All the tunes on *Starcaster* are basically enjoyable, from the gritty "Words To Live By" to the folksy "Part Of The Earth," the trippy "Words To Live By," and the cranked-up "Mona Lisa Overdrive." If this were a vinyl LP, I'd probably listen to half the tracks and be satisfied, but a dozen songs in a sitting seems a little excessive. But I suppose that's kind of a minor quibble.

HEAD OF DAVID
Seed State (CD)
(Mute/Blast First)

This outfit was one of the first to combine noisy guitars with an industrial beat, but *Seed State* shows that other bands have left them so far in the dust it's not even funny. I'd have to rate the vocals as "semi-harsh," and the guitars are barely above a light buzz. "Zen Walker" is a catchy tune, and "Wolf" is a surprisingly contemplative guitar-and-vocal piece, but there's not much challenge to this album, as a whole.

KARL HENDRICKS
I Hate This Party (7" EP)
(Peas Kor)

This 7" may sound like it's by a whining kid who hates parties, can't get the attention of women, etc., and I guess it is. And I suppose I have to be in the right sort of mood for Hendricks' repetitive riffing on a noisy, buzzing guitar. "Fuck Shit Up" is about the urgency with which some drink themselves into oblivion, but it's a surprisingly beautiful ballad you could slow dance to—if only you could get up the nerve to ask that special someone. And tell me you can't relate to that...

HERMANOS GUZANOS
UFO Executives
(Guzbro)

I have a lot of trouble getting into these guys, as they seem to offer very little in the way of melody, interesting rhythms, or involving lyrics. The singer's voice, too, is gruff and flat, expressing very little emotion, and songs like "Bert's Blues," "Leather Lovers," and "It's Your Birthday" just chug or plod along. "Nuclear-Powered Family" does have a bit in the way of texture, with piano and curlicue sax, and "She Rides Her Bike" combines see-saw synths and scratching guitars. Shauna came in during "Baldman" and used descriptions like "twisted," "fucked-up," and "near genius." I just found the whole thing rather boring.

HIJO KAIDAN
Windom (CD)
(Alchemy)

Volume 6 in the Good Alchemy Series, this one presents three new tracks from Hijo Kaidan, one of the most established noise groups in Japan. Track 1, "Crinkum-Crankum," has more high-pitched feedback wailing from the speakers. Track 2, "Ossification Of Our Bodies," is the trademark distortion squawk with Junko screaming away. Track 3 is a bit different, being a live one featuring guests M. Akita of Merzbow and F. Kosakai of Incapacitants. It is still, of course, pure noise assault. Bliss for the noise fanatic. As a bonus, the liner notes sport a complete Hijo Kaidan discography, including compilation appearances, going all the way back to 1980. And the color liner photo of snail sex is not

to be dismissed, either. *—Mason Jones*

IAN SANE
$1000 Faith (cassette)
(no label)

This is basically fast, clean dance music. There are eight songs on this tape, and while they're fairly repetitive, that kinda goes with the genre. It's all well-produced, with some nice samples. My only real complaint is that on many of the tracks we seem to get saddled with a good sample and then it gets bludgeoned over and over into our skulls. Just because it's a nice sample doesn't mean it has to be used 123 times in a track. *—Mason Jones*

INDIAN BINGO
"Big Rock" b/w "A Small Ribbon Of Hope" (7")
(Independent Project)

Pretty, tender guitar pop, recorded some five years ago. "Big Rock" fits in with other Independent Project stuff from the likes of Abecedarians or For Against, but it's not quite so melancholy. "Ribbon" emphasizes the slurred vocal phrasings of Mike Boul—sounding quite like G.W. McLennan—and a bassline with the texture of a knotted strand of thread. It's an O.K. tunes, but one that's a bit too listless for my taste. Stark letter-press cover is one of IPR's best.

INSANE JANE
A Little Green Pill (CD)
(Sky)

This debut album by this Athens, GA, combo got me a bit confused. The first track, "Once I," rolls along quite pretty, showcasing the clean, controlled voice of their front lady, Yellow, in a manner similar to Caterwaul. But then the songs mostly become more rockin', more AOR, and more not happening. Some parts recall Patti Smith or the band's neighbors the Ellen James Society—but trying to digest songs written about, and dedicated to, Sinead O'Connor and Pete Townshend...ya know, I just can't. *—Lawrence Crane*

IOTAS
"Gather Your Kind" & "Crux" b/w "Tellers Jones" (7")
(Crisis)

Peppy stuff with a '60s feel, tight drumming, and guitar that's used more for rhythm than lead. The shorter, more straightfordward cuts on side A are best, "Gather Your Kind" having flute-like keyboardss and "Crux" with tambourines and a funky snap to the bass. "Tellers Jones" is less successful, a five-minute prog rock number that's metal-ish in some spots and tries to be mystical and exotic in others. But, not bad stuff from this NC outfit.

PETER JEFFERIES/ROBBIE MUIR
"Catapult" b/w "The Fate Of The Human Carbine" (7")
(Ajax)

One of the most emotionally gripping songs I ever heard was "Randolph's Going Home" by Shayne Carter (pre-Straightjacket Fits) and Peter Jefferies. This is music cut from a similar cloth; lo-fi cathartic drones and rockiness, sort of in an early-VU way. I'm still scratching my head about why all this New Zealand music bowls me over. *—Lawrence Crane*

JONESTOWN
"Recall" b/w "Screw Crude" (7")
(C/Z)

I'm getting to know this band bit by bit, single by single, and I still don't really have a grip on them. "Recall" is my pick of the two songs here, a sharp tune with XTC-like vocals (I kid you not) and guitar and bass that team up to produce a robust fortitude. And there's some dexterous drum rolls I especially dig. The flip is a neo-folk protest song that I guess is O.K.

JUDAS & NATASHA EXPERIMENTS
(Not Everyone's) Cup Of Tea (cassette)
(The Moon)

A long tape of improvisation work with guitar, sax, synth, bass, percussion, and almost anything else you can think of. What with the kitchen-sink instrumentation, there's a lot of variety presented here, and I liked a lot of it. A lot of imaginative sound happens throughout. Unfortunately, what really did ruin it for me was Natasha's vocals, which are so determinedly off-key that I can't help but assume it's on purpose. Her voice is strong and determined, which ordinarily is good but in this case merely highlights the problem. There's promise here, however, which may lead to some really good work in the future. *—Mason Jones*

photo: Ruth Leitman

INSANE JANE

JUST DESERTS
"Almost Shook You Up" b/w "Flashing Blue" (7")
(Bar None)

Just because someone's a "singer/songwriter" doesn't always mean they should be shot, but here it does. AOR/MOR overwrought crap from this NYC duo. Really bad. Avoid. Write your congressman. *—Lawrence Crane*

JUST SAY NO/TESCO VEE'S HATE POLICE
Fuck Straight Edge Vol. 2 (7" EP)
(Staplegun)

Yikes! This EP is a throwback to when punk rock was loud, snotty, and obnoxious, but I'd be hard pressed to name more 'n a handful of records that had this much goddamn hair on their balls. Just Say No cover the Meatmen's "Toolin' For Anus" and the Weirdos' "Neutron Bomb," Tesco and crew pay homage to the Fix's "Vengeance" and Gang Green's "Alcohol." And the result is—as we used to say—way rockin'. White vinyl, for those of you into the collector thang.

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KICKING GIANT
Secret Teenage Summer (cassette)
(Loose Leaf)

My primitive pop flavor of the month. Kicking Giant are Tae on guitar and voice and Rachel on drums and voice, and *Secret Teenage Summer* convinces me that they really *are* good. Like Beat happening, they can write a catchy, innocent-sounding pop tune (though the lyrics are not naive kid stuff at all). But where *Boyfriend Girlfriend* excelled in its quieter tunes—and though *STS*'s "If Not You" shows a tender moment or two—here, they excel on songs like "Go Girl (Riot)", "Teen Angel," and "This Sex," where Tae cranks up the distortion and Rachel hammers away the best she can. Nice tape.

KING MISSILE
"My Heart Is A Flower" (CD5)
(Atlantic)

Oddly enough, the slammin' hip-hop beats of the Obligatory Major Label Sellout Mix fit nicely with John Hall's idiosyncratic story-telling vocal style. Distorted guitars, New Order-like synths, and inventive samples make this a real cool hybrid of a tune. Bonus tracks are pretty boring, though.

KLEG
Eating And Sleeping (#15) (CD)
(Barooni/Soleilmoon)

This Dutch outfit has five guitarists, but Kleg go for a quieter tension as compared to the crashing crescendos of Glenn Branca or Rhys Chatham. "Eating And Sleeping" is a 50-minute work in three parts, in which calm passages with sultry saxophone, meditative bass and bass clarinet, textual reciting, and snatches of opera get shoved rudely aside by a surge of anxious guitars and straining drum work. Part one, in particular, has somber, forboding chords that recall the Bad Seeds or Crime & The City Solution. But then the nervousness dissipates, and things become calmer, though never entirely tranquil. A thoughtful and well-executed work.

FRANKIE KNUCKLES
Beyond The Mix (CD)
(Virgin)

Smooth and polished, rather than hard and slammin', is this debut from the "Godfather" of Chicago house, but the overall quality of these tunes is fairly high. Producer Frankie Knuckles has assembled a bunch of his friends and come up with a varied album to call his own. Standouts include "Godfather" and "Workout," which combine the house rhythms of fellow producer/remixer David Morales and the vocal duo of diva Roberta Gilliam and rapper Roast Beef. On the other side of the coin are the ambient houser "The Whistle Song," the collection's first single, with airy flute trills from Paul Shapiro and the downtempo "Sold On Love," with the cool vocal sophistication of Lisa Michaelis. Then you've got the sparkling synth disco of the Satoshi Tomiie-penned tracks "Rain Falls" and "Sacrifice," plus the soul/gospel feel of Danny Madden's "It's Hard Sometime" and "Soon I Will Be Done," and the Musto & Bones-like dance track "Party At My House." A pleasing disc, but I wish Knuckles had gone a little heavier on the house tip.

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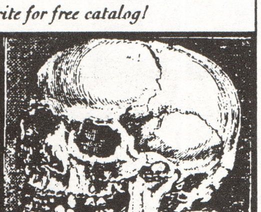

ANDREW LAGOWSKI
Lagowski 1990 (cassette)
(Mystery Hearsay)

Austere, yet compelling synth/programmed percussion work that proves accessibility and creativity are not always mutually exclusive. "Spectral" and "The Green Sepulchral Flame" resemble the Orb or an instrumental Depeche Mode, while "Urania" adds subliminal whispers. "Particle" has an underlying techno throb, and "Darktrach" has arching synthesizer strains and Kraftwerk-like voice synthesis. The Gothic/spacey atmospheres of "Systematic Kymograph Notation" overstay their welcome, but overall this is a nice tape.

LEFT HAND RIGHT HAND
Humdrum (EP)
Live 1990 (cassette)
(Tak Tak Tak)

Two releases, one a 6-track EP and the other a lengthy cassette of live performances from last year, both highlighting the beautiful percussion work of this trio. On these two releases, they are aided by a number of players on bass, saxophone, flute, and other instruments. But it's the percussion work that really makes LHRH operate. Frequently operating in what feels like a Middle-Eastern motif, the sound is clean and lush, and quite complex. Fans of work like Vasilisk and O Yuki Conjugate can't go wrong with this work. Word has it they're touring the U.S. this spring, so keep those eyes peeled. *—Mason Jones*

LETCH PATROL/YOUTH GONE MAD
"Ode To Fred" b/w "Better Things" & "Motorcycles" (7")
(YGM)

First I thought this was a one-band single, then I decided it's two bands and had to figure out which band is which. Letch Patrol do a stupid, slow rock drone with really, really dumb lyrics that wonder if little girls will worship the narrator when he dies, or something like that. Extra points for piss-poor guitar sound! Youth Gone Mad play two fast punk rock songs. They're real bad, too. I think this is two different bands. Who knows. *—Lawrence Crane*

[Gosh, Larry, don't you read MRR*? —ed.]*

photo: Liane Hentscher

LEVITATION

LEVITATION
Coterie
(Capitol)

I've certainly heard my share of this hazy guitar music, but I can't completely damn

Levitation's efforts—at least they're not spitting out pop fluff and mooning about it. I could easily throw away three-quarters of this compilation of four studio and three live recordings, but toothy songs like "Squirrel" enable me to forgive dim, by-the-numbers songs like "Firefly." The dreadful live track "Rosemary Jones" drones away for eight minutes, but then the powerful "Smile" (also an eight-minute live track) blew me away. Nevertheless, this group isn't likely to challenge Ride in my heart. *—Richards*

LLWYBR LLAETHOG
Mewn Dyb (cassette)
(ROIR)

Intriguing stuff from the band whose name looks like a typo. "Ai Bod Dub" and "Mynd Adre' Dub" start things off with some heavy ultra dub, with guitar, drums, piano, and (occasional) vocals, all thrown through a ton of echo. "Marion McKeone" picks things up with a ska beat, and "oh yeah!" sampling, while the weakest number, "Rhyfel," has an industrial-like feel, with harsh vocals a la Skinny Puppy. The Welsh quartet continue their eclectic ways on side two, taking reggae where it's never been before. "Baile Atha Chiath" adds hip-hop rhythms and ample amounts of scratching; the housey "Cariad" features twisted guitar solos and pounding African beats' and "Mae'n Bywyd Braf" has cool acid house synthesizers. I had a ball raking leaves to this on a Thanksgiving afternoon, and if you're looking for something a little bit different, I think you'll dig this, too.

LONELY TROJANS
Three Guys Six Songs (EP)
(Limited Potential)

Hyperactive Jam-meet-Ned's Atomic Dustbin stuff from these Chicagoland boys. The Lonely Trojans pack plenty of bounce per ounce, but only the buoyant punk/pop of "McEurope" really gets my juices flowing, with stellar drum bashing from Mike Meadows.

LOS BICHOS
"Wishin' Shift" (7")
(Oihuka)

This sleepy Ezponda dude can't seem to decide if he's Keith Richards or Nikki Sudden or Billy Idol or Chris Isaak or just about any tuxedo shirt wearin' rock & roll cretin you'd care to mention. And if that string of names confuses you, wait until you hear this. Music that's just begging to be hated by fans of just about every musical genre, but, for some strange and mysterious reason, doesn't achieve its goal. There's something abnormally appealing about this that I can't quite put my finger on, but when I do I'm going to squash it like a bug. *—Kevin Kraynick*

MACHANIC MANYERUKE AND THE PURITANS
Machanic Manyeruke And The Puritans
(Flying Fish)

Getting a package in the mail from Flying Fish has never been cause for much alarm around my pad unless it's got some John Hartford stuffed in it, but the one this one arrived with was a veritable treasure chest due to its presence. The press kit accurately describes Machanic's guitar sound as being "fruity." Assisted by only two backup singers and an organist on these 13 self-penned spiritual numbers, Zimbabwe's Machanic dominates these recordings with his joyful strumming and his impassioned singing. Nothing more, nothing less. If this resplendent musical testament is the result of an inordinate amount of religious conviction on Manyeruke's part, I can't wait to hear what he'll be spitting out when he finally gets to where he really wants to go. Lord, have mercy. Someone leave the porch light on for this son of a bitch.*—Kevin Kraynick*

MAGNETIC FIELDS
"100,000 Fireflies" b/w "Old Orchard Beach" (7")
(Harriet)

"100,000 Fireflies" is a stunner—clear, delicate pop with just the barest of rhythms. The focus of the tune is the striking vocal work of Susan Anway, as the soft beauty of her singing plays beautifully off the sparkling keyboards of Stephen Merritt. "Old Orchard Beach" is folksier, but thin and a bit pinched-sounding, Here, we have string and calliope-like accompaniment, as well as gentle tuba puffing by guest Johny Blood. Not as lovely as the A-side, but I'd like to check out their CD.

DON MALONE
Vilet Lamp (cassette)
(no label)

Don's algorithmically generated, one-of-a-kind tapes are hit or miss affairs. this one, created on 10/9/1991, is quite enjoyable—spacey, but not in a serene, starry-night kind of way. Instead, the music here suggests harsh, outer solar system sunlight illuminating angular shapes against a pitch black sky. A succession of sounds echo and then slowly trail off, creating a noise that's grand and imposing at times, bleak and eerie at others. The effect is more of a continuous, installation-type background than of a closed-ended composition, but it's nice stuff nonetheless.

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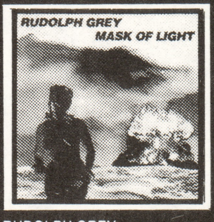

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MARY ON THE DASH

MARY ON THE DASH
Charivari (cassette)
(Hot Bed/Black Park)

Odd stuff, in that this band seems to have completely slept through the punk era. (*Charivari* has passing resemblances in attitude to the Pixies or Godfathers, but they seem to be as a result of coincidence rather than direct intent.) Fortunately, they seem to have slept through Bon Jovi and Poison, too. Songs such as "Unwound" are gritty stuff with a hard, biting guitar sound, vocalizing from a singer with a prime rock & roll voice, and decent backing harmonies, too. It's not a standout, but *Charivari* is a refreshing blast from the past.

MASSACRE
From Beyond (cassette)
(Earache/Relativity)

Yep, this is death metal, with pummeling drums, corpse-like vocals, and lyrics straight out of some gory and evil fantasy world. But while most albums by bands of the genre bludgeon you such that you don't live beyond the first few minutes, Massacre take you on a wild ride. "Dawn Of Eternity" is like a tractor trailer truck that takes awhile to pick up steam, but when it does, it blasts a wide swath, sending debris flying, until it runs smack dab into a sheer rock cliff. "Succubus" and "From Beyond" shift gears frequently, coast from time to time, and the zoom around a sharp turn to embark on a new direction, while Rick Rozz's crazy UFO guitar solos dart overhead. Nothing new here, but these guys do know how to rev it up and go.

MEATHOOKS
Cambodia Soul Music (LP)
(Disastromix)

Noisy stuff with industrial-type distorted vox and battering programmed percussion. But these guys deliver the goods in a punkier style than most, "Demon Master Spew" and "Cerebral Demolition Units" having singing that has just a little more venom and music that has a little more drive. And there's plenty of abrasive guitar action throughout *Cambodia Soul Music*, not to mention a quick "Tribute To Gerogerigegege." But the industrial influences come back to haunt these guys, as the constraints of the ol' beatbox prevent Meathooks from rocking with true punk abandon. Cool sleeve that's mystical and just a little bit scary.

MECCA NORMAL
I Can Hear Me Fine (7")
(Smarten Up!)

"Follow Down" is a catchy number that is the closest this duo will ever come to sounding like the Doobie Bros. and "It's Important" ranks as one of Lester/Smith's most sonic works yet, Jean struggling with her guitar while she duets with herself like only she can. There are only so many ways I can tell you that Ms. Smith has one of the most compelling voices in the history of recorded music, and if I had the time I would, but you owe it to yourself to at least give her pipes a peep. *—Kevin Kraynick*

MEDIA HYPE
Read My Lips (EP)
(Tenderloin Waxx)

Three mixes (regular, FCC, and instrumental) of a very powerful hip-hop song. Strong rhythms, clean samples (including a killer bass riff) and best of all, intelligent lyrics. Instead of redundant gangster stories or misogynistic rhymes, we get anti-ostrich syndrome common sense like "People dyin' from the 12-gauge/and you wonder where the rage comes from?" and "This country's got a predilection/for movin' in the wrong direction." Intelligent and well produced, check it out. *—Mason Jones*

MELVINS
Live (LP)
(Your Choice)

I just recently discovered this series of sanctioned live releases on the Your Choice label, due to its release of a Melvins LP. The other bands in this series are better known to European hardcore audiences or those who read *MRR* intently (e.g. So Much Hate, Verbal Assault, Raped Teenagers), but the packaging is first-class, and the sound is great—in this case, really capturing the Melvins' live ultra-heavy attack better than their studio LPs. One Deutschmark from the sale of each Your Choice record goes to Lynx, an anti-fur activist group, which is yet another reason to get yourself hip to these records. *—Manny Theiner*

MEN & VOLTS
Cheer Up (LP)
(50 Skidillion Watts)

If there's ever been a band that's never received the critical or popular acclaim it's deserved, either above or below ground, it's Men & Volts. Too easily digestible and tidy for the post-punk legions and too intellectual for the standard rock set, Men & Volts have quietly been releasing some of the best music on the independent level for well over a decade now and hardly anyone seems to have noticed. First off, David Greenberger (who some of you may know as the editor of *Duplex Planet*) is one of the best lyricists underground rock has ever produced. Check out these words from the brilliant ballad "Boomtown" (replete with a six-horn back-up): "The traffic all moves slowly and no one honks a horn/No yelling and no shouting and swearing isn't sworn." And the band, led by lead vocalist, songwriter and guitarist Phil Kaplan, is one of the most proficient working the circuit these days. Kaplan can pen one heck of a catchy melody, too. *Cheer Up*, as my roommate Jake so eloquently put it, is the perfect Sunday afternoon hangover album, but I'd like to take it several steps further and say it's the perfect pop album. Period. *—Kevin Kraynick*

MIRANDA WARNING
Your Life Is Excellent Now (CD)
(Presto)

I've long given up the possibility of Miranda Warning maturing into a topnotch band. In their heyday, they got by more on youthful enthusiasm than real inspiration. Still, the Bostonians manage to come up with a handful of winners on this one. "Missed Opportunities" and "Heaven Tonight" are ringing guitar strum tunes in the old MW style, and Adam Boc shows he's learned a few neat guitar licks on "Am I The One." Departed bassist Ben Robinson's melancholy "Hell Bent For Viola" is an instrumental with great viola work, and the tuneful Welcome Mat cover "Wave" is another good change of pace, as is the Boc solo "Our Hero." But half this disc consists of power pop songs that are definitely not so excellent now.

MOLECULES
Steel Toe (CD)
(Tragic Mule)

This album starts slowly, but gets stronger and stronger as it goes along, with 22 tracks (half of which hover around the one-minute mark) reminiscent of Naked City or the Minutemen gone free jazz. My favorites are the full-out boiling noise of "Mt. Shasta" and "Skate Park," and the jazzier 1-2-3 punch of "Flea Bop," "Nerve Jazz," and "Bitch." Plus, you've got "She's A Banker," with its persistent, grating rhythm guitar, and "Smash The State," with its lumbering bass, crinkly guitars, and anarchic shouts. The cover drawing of a slavering character, teeth and chunks of tongue flying, pretty much sums it up.

MONKS OF DOOM
Meridian (cassette)
(Baited Breath)

This is the third, and most focused, release from these Camper Van Beethoven escapees. It seems that with their change from side project to band that more energy and ideas were brought to the Monks; there's some instrumentals that recall CVB's brighter moments, and several songs that just tear me apart. "Going South" is a great tale of exorcising lost love in Mexico, with Victor's much-improved voice leading into verses sung in Spanish. It's sad, beautiful stuff, accented by Greg's haunting guitarwork. "The Better Angels Of Our Nature" is similar, with Victor once again describing a sad event—

and you have to understand, his voice is not at all "singerly"; it's just real, and it works. There's only a few disappointments on this album. A few tracks just seem to be excuses for musical workouts, and some that Mr. Immergluck sings have pretty dumb words, but getting past these to the better songs is well worth it. *—Lawrence Crane*

MONKS OF DOOM

MONOCHROME BLEU
Live Tere (cassette)
(Mystery Hearsay)

It's been awhile since I've heard any Monochrome Bleu, so I was pleasantly surprised by this fairly rockin' live tape. "Tough Guys" has some nice guitars in addition to the electronic drums, "Ennio" and "Stay Or Go" are augmented by sinuous sax lines, "Animals" has a funky bassline, despite its clunky beat, and there's even some gangly dub on "Dub Star" and "Loser." Some low-key excitement here.

MOON FESTIVAL
Shrine (cassette)
(Dragon Street)

Man, I hated this tape. The kindest thing I can do for it is to keep my review brief; I'm at a loss to find a high point. Things start out poorly and then, with the exception of "Simulated Bliss," get steadily worse. Pop/rock, including unmemorable keyboards, that offers slow playing and slower vocals, which fail in any attempt to affect angst or drama. Nearly everything is slow and droning, but then absolutely unlistenable ballads like "She" are thrown in which sound like the tape is being turned manually. I really can't believe the band itself enjoys listening to this album. *—Richards*

[Actually, I didn't think it was nearly as bad as all that. First two tunes were crystaline pop reminiscent of the Church. The album did gradually deteriorate as it went on, but whaddya want... —ed.]

STEVE MOORE
The Threshold Of Liberty (cassette)
(Inner Ear)

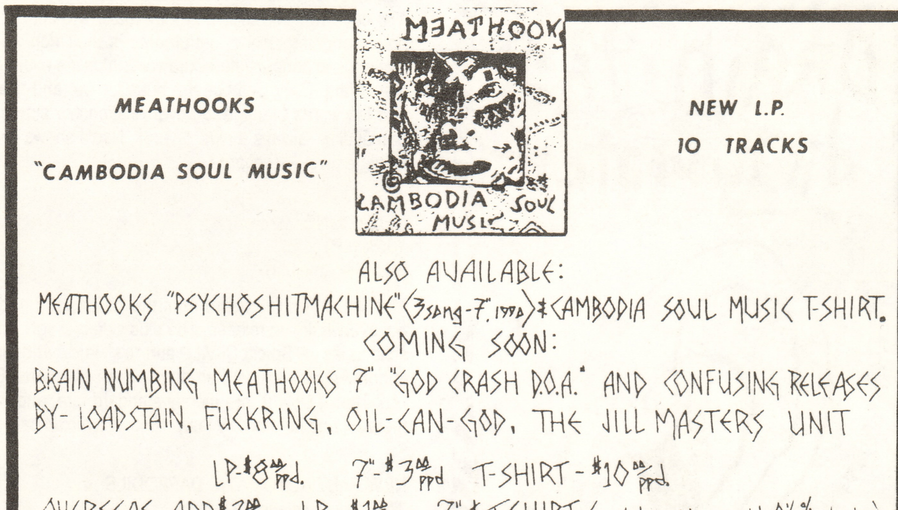
This tape contains six sound collage works from '82-'84. "The Threshold Of Liberty" builds loops of frenzied strings and shouts into a disquieting morass; "No" is the most imaginative piece, building and altering that single word into countless patterns; and "Hermetic Discourse" pairs dreamy and mournful dulcimer-type sounds with a tennis match, and auto race, and cheering crowds. "Nostalgia Of The Infinite" is a mysterious drone piece; "Dream Logic" has whispers alongside a light percussive patter; and "The Return Of The Poet" woos your ear with everyday sounds, such as crackling fire, gurgling water, playing children, and ticking clocks. All are very carefully done, but sound a little too calculated for comfort.

MOOSE
Sonny And Sam (cassette)
(Virgin)

Compiled from three 12" singles, this album undergoes a remarkable evolution in just seven songs. "Last Night I Fell Again" is a likable, shades-of-grey, New Order-like tune, with Sumner/Kilbey-style vocals. The next tune, "The River Will Never Run Dry," is my least favorite—sleepy and folksy, with rather idle-sounding guitar strumming. The eight-minute "Do You Remember" starts off equally languid, but then a shimmer of guitar feedback enters, building and accelerating, as the drums really begin to take hold. Then Moose go further into swirly My Bloody Valentine/Pale Saints territory, but I'm a sucker for that stuff if it's done well—and "Jack" and the three songs that follow certainly are. A modest success.

MUDWIMMIN
"Wild Bill" b/w "R U Sleeping?" & "Jizm Skiz" (7")
(Imp)

Yeah, there are a lot of female rock bands these days, but you've never heard anything



quite like these Wimmin. There's nothing tender or delicate about this rollicking steroid rock. They could give Killdozer a run for their money—powerful vocals, powerful geetar, powerful drumming. Look at the Mudwimmin cross-eyed and they'll wrassle you to the ground, I swear.

MUFFS
"New Love" b/w "I Don't Like You" & "You Lied To Me" (7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

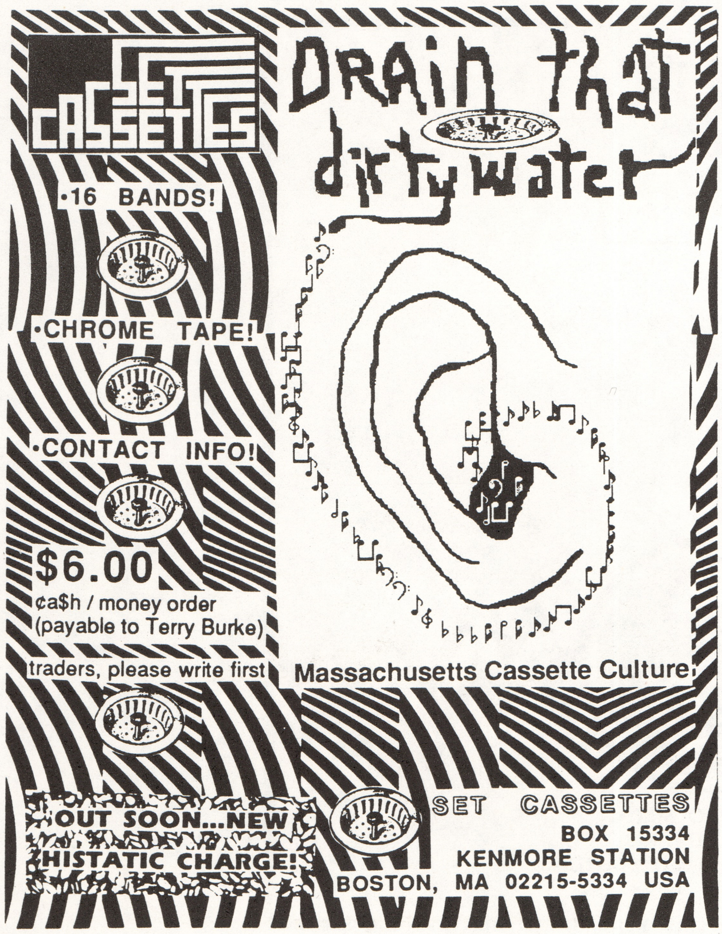
From the looks of the sleeve, I was expecting another Hole or Babes In Toyland, but the Muffs combine '60s girl-group vocals with Ramones-like riffing. "I Don't Like You" is especially punked up, Kim Shattuck's guitar leads searing through the mix, and boy rhythm section keeping things rolling. (I can name dozens of good female drummers, but odds are that a male is going to pound the skins a little harder.) Tasty, and on clear wax, too.

MY DAD IS DEAD
Chopping Down The Family Tree (CD)
(Scat)

This latest effort from Mark Edwards feels like it should be two separate albums. The first five songs are surprisingly dense, with a thick guitar sound and heavy, whomping drums—stultifying stuff that just slogs along. But then something happens, 'cause the last seven songs ranks among the bast My Dad Is Dead have ever done. First of all, the smog lifts, revealing lighter textures that allow the listener to breathe. The bass suddenly becomes more melodic, the drum sound lightens up, and the layered guitar strumming gets enough elbow room for it to be able to get its hooks into you. Then there's the subject matter. Edwards' life is still filled with pain and desperation—which he accepts stoically, without bitching and moaning—but the second half of this disc concerns itself with not loneliness, but with a love affair. O.K., it *is* a bittersweet love affair, and one that ultimately fails, but Edwards savors it while he can. "This is the best time we ever had, and nothing can take that away...It doesn't matter if it all crumbles. It doesn't matter if I never feel the same again," he sings on "Without A Doubt." Spoken like a true pessimist.

MY NAME
"A Woman's Touch" b/w "My Wife" (7")
(C/Z)

This Tacoma band takes the worst pretentions of jazzy punksters such as No Means No, Poopshovel, and Alice Donut (who all *have* done good stuff, as well) and puts them all together for the most annoying single this issue. Both tunes are characterized by stop/go tempos and rhythm changes, as well as whining guitars and wailing vocals. (Or is that wailing guitars and whining vocals?) Basically, this stuff grates on my nerves.



MYSTERY IGUANA
The Mystic Earth (cassette)
(Videospeak/Mystery Hearsay)

A cassette of well-produced synthesizer music that doesn't quite hit the spot for me. Side A combines buzzing sounds with echoing new age-ish synth work. Side B was more satisfying, with very crystalline sounds like bells and clean tones. Pleasant, yet somehow a bit empty. I've heard its like before, and this doesn't come up with anything to make it stand out from the pack. *—Mason Jones*

NATION OF ULYSSES
13-Point Program To Destroy America (LP)
(Dischord)

This band carves out tunes with quick tempos, a light but abrasive guitar sound, and uncomplicated drum bashing. Somehow, the tunes rather grate on my nerves, though, possibly because of the slightly hysterical, stilted-sounding vocals—or the fact that Ulysses are as much prog rock as they are punk rock. And I don't know what to make of the manifesto-like liner notes, either. The rather tuneless blare of Ian Svenonius' trumpet is about the only thing I really enjoy about this LP.

NECRACEDIA
Now I See Clearly (LP)
(Wreck Age)

This Pittsburgh hardcore band managed to get a New York label to put out this blue vinyl album. It's straight-ahead three-or-four chord *MRR*-style hardcore punk with some guitar licks here and there and a gamut of the usual anti-establishment topics—racsim, posers, capitalists. But there's also some working-class insight into wife beating and day-to-day punk lifestyles, as well as a humorous tune about falling in love with the daughter of Anton LaVey. The music and attitude of Necracedia will appeal to those who think punk through and through, or at least pretend they do. *—Manny Theiner*

NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN
God Fodder (cassette)
(Columbia)

Guns ablazing, Ned's Atomic Dustbin bursts onto a scene which can't really be hurt by a new dose of violent irreverence. These guys, whose senior member is 22 (galling, isn't it?), have two bassists, and they make a damn lot of noise at a pretty fast pace. One notch louder than the instruments is their rich-voiced singer John Penney, who also manages to squeezeafewextrawordsintoaline every now and again. The standout track is the vibrant "Grey Cell Green," but "Cut Up" and "Happy" do their part with ultraviolence, and the words manage to cover relationship struggles without becoming heavy-handed or maudlin—always a plus. Overall, Ned's shows some promise—and they're probably a lot better live. *—Richards*

NEGAZIONE
100% (LP)
(We Bite America)

This is the first I've heard from this Italian HC band in awhile, and it's a competent, but not overwhelming release. The plus side is a tight, muscular guitar sound and a couple of solid tunes in "Brucia Di Vita" and "It's Hard." And the LP's opener, "Back To My Friends" is grimy punk rock with an ample dash of smarts. But "Yesterday Pain" and "Fall Apart (An' Tear It Down)" are merely standard fare, and "Welcome (To My World)" is sluggish, metallic, and not horribly tasty. Kind of a mixed bag.

NEW FAST AUTOMATIC DAFFODILS
The Peel Sessions (CD)
(Strange Fruit/Dutch East India)

Two sessions here, radically different in feel, but recorded less than a year apart. The '89 songs are much more frenetic, drummer Perry and percussionist Icarus propelling the band at a dizzying speed. On "Man Without Qualities II" and "Jaggerbog," Dolan's guitar is thin and biting, while Justin's bass bounces around like a marble in a blender. And the group abbreviates Hendrix's "Purple Haze" into a nervous, jittery 1:40. But by '90, the guys must've cut back on the coffee, 'cause they're much less anxious—and less fun, too. "Get Better" is the best of the later set, with Andy's voice taking a turn toward Pete Townshend land. "Part 4" seems downright sluggish, with a slow, reggae-ish beat.

NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS
The Early Years, 1958-1962 (CD)
(Smithsonian/Folkways)

A 26-track CD collection that seems to just go on forever. Three nerdy-looking dudes who were obsessed with breathing new life into "hillbilly music" they learned from their

78s and did a pretty good job of it with a guitar, a fiddle and a banjo. Dusty old classics like "Sales Tax On The Women," "Sal's Got A Meatskin," "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" and "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down" are revitalized, rather than regurgitated, by virtue of their accomplished and spirited musicianship. Best of all is guitarist John Cohen's adaptation of Lonnie Glosson's witty talking blues number "Talking Hard Luck." Detailed liner notes make this a tasteful introduction to an often overlooked trio. I'll meet you in the corn silo at twelve. —*Kevin Kraynick*

ONOMATOPEIA
It's Onomatopeia (LP)
(Cheeses International)

Four long tracks, totalling over 40 minutes, with nice liner notes to let you in on what's going on. If you like surrealistic prose, that is. As I listened to the first track, I felt as though I were underwater, with a large beast clicking its claws near me, leaving me wondering...Next there were critters in my room depriving me of my furniture and shaking straw brooms about. The third track went by too fast, but the fourth one took me to the brink of my backyard well, in which aliens were letting their guitars echo while their ships hovered overhead, listening and recording. I may never be the same. —*Mason Jones*

ORNAMENT
"Tonight" b/w "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" (7")
(No. 6)

Oddly captivating collaboration between Greg Dulli (Afghan Whigs) and Marcy Mays (Scrawl). "Tonight" is a light-headed Jandek sort of tune, with thin, listless vocals and distracted acoustic guitars. The flip is a rather blase treatment of the hit, with Mays and Dullis' vocals mingling quite casually. The guitars are just a tad coarser here, too. I guess this was a one-shot kind of project, and that's too bad.

PAIN CLINIC
My Dog's Name Is Spot (cassette)
(no label)

Give the same recipe to a dozen cooks and you'll get everything from a gourmet meal to slop for the hogs. "Organization" shows how this cook (Alex V. Cook, that is) can take a hackneyed formula—collaging together classical music, king Crimson, the Cure, and news/talk radio—and come up with something worth chowing down on. And the rest of an enjoyable side two includes "Juvenile Computer Sounds On An Uncooperative Tape," merging baroque and minimalism, then destroying them both; "Laughing At Traffic," blending street sounds with sporting event crowd noises and canned laughter; and "The End (Close The Doors)," laying down some pause-button madness. Most of side one, however, is worth only a single listen, but I especially got a kick out of "Music Appreciation Condensed To Fit The Student Budget," which covers the scope of Western music in 2-1/2 minutes—from Gregorian chants, though Mozart and Stravinsky, to Hindemith, Cage, and "of course" Herb Alpert. Handmade box and inserted goodies make for some extra fun.

PAIN TEENS
"Sacrificial Shack" b/w "Sweetheart" (7")
(C/Z)

More heavy, sullen, pounding noise from this Houston band, the A-side with ominous, buzzing guitars and lazy, smeared-out vocals from Bliss Blood. And I got quite a kick out of the flip, a powerful rendition of the Zeni Geva tune. Here, the slightly faster tempo and the female vocals add a twist to the bruising original.

PAVEMENT
Exact Wording Of Threat (7" EP)
(Drag City)

Well, we're up to 1990 in the Pavement saga. "Summer Babe" is the group's most pop song to date, and maybe it's their most focused, breathed to life by easygoing but imaginative drumming and a gentle guitar buzz. "Mercy Seat" is back to the monotone, and "Baptiss Blacktick: is like the Fall's "No Bulbs" blended with the Placemats' "Bastards Of Young." Pavement may be insulted by that comparison, but since I like both those tunes, I think it's sort of a compliment.

PELL MELL
"Bring On The China" (7")
(SST)

Christ, the minute "China" kicks in you can imagine a butt-naked and bountiful Geena Davis rolling up to you in a cherry red sports car and holding out a handful of blue meanies in your direction. Right out of a movie. This all-instrumental gang has dragged themselves back into a studio and bruised out two more elegant numbers. No whiney, ex-rich kid lead singer with a propensity to snort heroin off of toilet bowl tanks in the bathrooms of bars. No pseudo-psycho ex-fanzine editor bent on some sadsack Daniel Johnston routine who puts his very first strums on a guitar out on vinyl. None of the trappings and predictability of what has made underground rock such a gas to completely ignore at times. These guys just want to play good music and I respect them for that. Pell Mell make me feel like rolling with the punches instead of throwing them. —*Kevin Kraynick*

AL PERRY AND THE CATTLE
"Good Life" (7")
(ERL)

Never quite expected ERL to put out anything as tumblin'-tumbleweed as the Cattle, but dog bless 'em for doing so. "Good Life" features some of Al's most psychedelic guitar vibrations since he split the Overcoats. It's a damn good creepy crawly lurch, regardless of the overt silliness of the lyrics. "Bitter Pill" ranks among one of Perry's best compositions, a fuzzed-out, honky-tonk kick in the pants. Close it out with one of the Cattle's requisite instrumentals (the life-affirming "Gerbils") and you've got yourself a full tank of fuel. Fire the mother up. —*Kevin Kraynick*

PGR/MERZBOW/ASMUS TIETCHENS
Grav (CD)
(Silent)

Though I wasn't blown away at first, this CD is a worthy collaboration between three top underground artists. "The Book Of A Thousand Hands" is dominated by the bowed metal of Merzbow, with a resonance reminiscent of Robert Rutman's work. The gurgle and hum of PGR and Asmus Tietchens' tapes and electronics fill out the sound nicely. "Three Hemispheres" is somewhat harsher, with shirring, scraping, and grinding sounds that give the piece a machine shop-like quality. These two long pieces are dynamic sound constructions that have well defined textures and a great sense of space. "Hymns From The Furnace," in contrast, is more atmospheric. Here, PGR takes raw material from the other artists and layers it, for a deep, refined sound. *Grav* brings the work of three disparate artists together and comes up with something that is a distinct entity on its own.

PINK SLIP DADDY
"Junkyard" b/w "Live Sex & Violence" (7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

Trashy rots rock, kinda like the Gibson Bros., from this two-boy/two-girl Philly-area band. "Junkyard" has growly guitars and wheezy harmonica, softened up by some catchy female backing vocals. The flip is a sloppy live jam with vocals that sound like a duet between Lux Interior and Lydia Lunch. I think I like the A-side better. Watermelon vinyl.

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UPCOMING RELEASE:
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LISA POWER
Who Are We Tonight (cassette)
(Power)

I'm not really into the singer/songwriter thing, but this is pleasant, sweet-voiced material in an intimate setting. And fortunately, the four tunes here have more in common with, say, the Story than they do Tracey Chapman. Most of the songs are guitar-based, but nice touches include the subtle percussion on the title track and the warm, rich sax on "I Thought You Loved Me." An O.K. tape, but I don't find these tunes to be especially memorable.

PRISONSHAKE
Della Street (CD5)
(Scat)

Droney, slow-to-midtempo guitar rock, featuring the guitarwork of Scat label head Robert Griffin. Unfortunately, his subtle picking tends to get buried in music that has a Dyanesque monotone quality, and the vocals have a whiney Gordon Gano-like feel. "Carnival Game" stands out, a head-bobbing pop tune where the guitars have a bit more chime, as does the seven-minute "Stuck In St. Louis, 1985," with the band gradually picking up the pace into a Perfect Disaster-type blur of sound. Prisonshake's songs are like a batch of sepia-toned prints—done right, the textures are compelling; done wrong, they're just a bunch of old photographs.

PSYCLONES & PACIFIC 231
Ecstasy On Rye (cassette)
(Ladd-Frith)

This release was quite a surprise for me. Given the previous releases by this pairing (really a trio, I suppose), I wasn't prepared for what's really a collection of classical music. Keyboard-based, so there's no trace of the trademark Psyclones guitar/bass sound, this tape instead gives us very nice orchestral-sounding pieces. Sometimes calm, like a nocturne, sometimes quite dramatic and edgy. I love this kind of work, taking classical samples and moving into realms where an orchestra can't always go. More, please. *—Mason Jones*

QUBAIS REED GHAZALA
Burning Suns Of Shadow Worlds (cassette)
(Ladd-Frith)

This cassette primarily operates in the arena of what I consider soundscape work, in that it's difficult to distinguish different pieces, and there's really no need to do so. Sounds move in and out, interacting with each other and the listener. At times there are drums and bass, occasionally orchestral-style sounds, and yet other times noises like trains and the unidentifiable work their way into the mix. Uncategorizable music which could be the soundtrack to the life of the world. Quite worthwhile. *—Mason Jones*

RAKE
"Motorcycle Shoes"+3 (7")
(L)

These guys have actually gone off the deep end since their last single. "Motorcycle Shoes" has strangulated vocals and distorted guitars that bristle like a short-circuiting amplifier. The flip compresses three songs into and absolutely incoherent mess. You can hear the drums going full tilt, so you know it's rock & roll. A total whirlwind blast that'll blow away the timid. Sky blue vinyl.

JAKE RARDIN'S HUMAN ISLAND
Jake Rardin's Human Island (cassette)
(TVM)

This was unexpected; the cassette is dedicated to a good cause, that being homelessness. Despite the professional packaging, I expected the music to be raw, somehow, given the topic. What I discovered, to my surprise, was extremely slick music without any trace of rawness or, unfortunately, emotion. Sounding like a cross between Al DiMeola and Jean-Michel Jarre, it was far too artificial to make me feel as though it addressed any of the topics indicated by the song titles. Still, it's a good cause. *—Mason Jones*

REFRIGERATOR
Rael (cassette)
(Shrimper)

I really grooved on Refrigerator's brilliant (and uneven) last tape, but *Rael* is somewhat less pleasing. I guess the main reason is Allen's voice, which gets pretty annoying on "Hairport," "Ruins," or any other song where it's laid right on top of the "mix." He makes guys like Jandek or Bobby D sound like Frank Sinatra. Still, there are plenty of nuggets here, from the roar of "Shine" to the warm guitar rumble and tip-tap drumming of "Dick C." Also enjoyed "Laughing," "Lines," and "Love Bean," but I could do without most of side two.

RESIDENTS
Freak Show (CD)
(Cryptic/T.E.C. Tone)

After a recent viewing of *Ralph Video Volume 1* and a tour through *Tunes Of Two Cities*, this excessive Lynchian concept CD is a drag. As a long time Resident fan, I'm going to be one of the few of my ilk to admit that this group ran out of petrol years ago. The emotionless programmed keyboard tomfoolery they've taken to of late isn't very compelling and a guitar or two would be swell. Christ, sometimes they sound like the New Pulse Jazz Band. I wish Snakefinger could phone in a couple of licks from wherever he's set up camp. This is probably garnering accolades from people who should know better, but it gets a sharp poke in the eye from me. Fucking join the circus already. *—Kevin Kraynick*

RICHIES
Spring Surprise (LP)
(We Bite America)

"Blitzkrieg Bop" crossed with "Palisades Park" on this one, as the German band combines punk energy with pop appeal. On *Spring Surprise*, the Richies cover such favorite topics as surfing, motorcycles, and girls. In other words, there's not a serious bone in their bodies, but they're having a heck of a lot of fun. "A Town Named Horst," "DT 125," "Hell's Grannies," and "I've Got A Bush" oughta be appreciated by people who (like me) thought that Phil Spector producing the Ramones was actually a good idea. Gabba gabba hey.

SAD SACK
"Heinous Bitch" b/w "Trash It" (7")
(ERL)

My favorite of the latest crop from ERL, this 45 kicks up a real nasty stink, with grinding guitars, hoarse, almost rabid vocals, and clanking rhythms. Irritating cesspool rock for a world gone sour.

THE SARNOS

SARNOS
The Sarnos (7" EP)
(Heyday)

This urban folk thing is not my cup of tea, but the lilting voice of Liz Kennedy does strike a nice balance with the earthier tones of Sam Koritz's singing, the effect being like a more delicate Marcel Monroe. Acoustic guitar and bass, plucked violins, and harmonica round out the mix on tunes with semi-clever lyrics. Also included is a rather cutesy version of Billy Joel's "You May Be Right," this time with spoken vocals. O.K. stuff, but it doesn't really charm me.

PAUL SCHUTZE
The Annihilating Angel (CD)
(Extreme)

Smooth and flowing 11-track CD that may be a little new agey for some, but its high quality should make this appeal to fans of Michael Shrieve or Jon Hassell. Compositions such as "The Torture Garden," "The Fatal Muse," and "Reign Of Ashes" are not as morose as their names suggest. Schutze's synths are spacious and his exotic percussion blessed with fine nuances, while guest musicians flavor the pieces with touches of guitar, trumpet, and voice. The uptempo beat on "Loss & The Hand Lense" hurries things a bit, and other tracks do not hold up to close inspection, but this disc does make for pleasant background listening.

SCREAMIN' POPEYES
Ah Squid (cassette)
(no label)

Really enjoyed the jazzy style of the Popeyes' last cassette, but a lot of talent goes to waste on this rather goofy concept tape. *Ah Squid* is riddled with cartoony synth music, munchkin-like voices, and lyrics about square dances involving a variety of undersea creatures. Hey, chickens don't live underwater!

SEAWEED
Despised (CD)
(Sub Pop)

At least most of the songs on this disc have been previously released on bassist John Atkins' now-defunct Leopard Gecko label, but if you don't have those early singles, *scoop this up*, 'cause *Despised* is grungy, metallic rock & roll that out Sub Pops the Sub Poppers. And with ten tunes in just 28 minutes, they eliminate the self-worshipping solos and strip the songs down to their essence. I totally dig these guys.

SEKA
Love Shim (CD)
(Taang)

These Bostonians crank out speedmetal with a matte black finish (i.e., no excess flash) and a real ragged feel ("W.M.F." barely hangs together, and "Cutlet" busts so hard out of the gate that it almost trips over its own feet. The seven-minute "Caesarean" does overstay its welcome, but "People Suck" and "Black Kiss" flat out *rock*. I guess I could call this band a guilty pleasure, but, hey, if it feels good...

SENATOR FLUX
Storyknife (cassette)
(Emergo)

This six-person band from DC supposedly has three other LPs out (news to me) and have been around for quite some time. And damned if this doesn't open with "Canadia," a great tune with horn flourishes and a seeming nod to Camper Van in some respects. But then the whole project seems to drone on; simple riff-based songs and a very wordy vocalist (always singing...) seem to bog it down. There is something good going on here that seems to be getting lost along the way. I'd like to hear the earlier records to try to understand this. *—Lawrence Crane*

SHAGNASTYS
Young, Dumb & Beautiful (cassette)
(Dragon Street)

Pleasant, all-American rock & roll here, with R.E.M./Smithereens-style guitars and vocals from songwriter and lead Nasty Rex Ewing. The no-frills bash-and-crash drumming of Howard Thomas gives tunes such as "Wednesday's Nicotine Blues" and "Forgotten" a direct, hard-hitting feel similar to that of Dash Rip Rock. This quartet ain't offering anything novel, but their tight playing and competent tunesmithing are welcome any day of the week.

SHAKE MECHANICS
Bits And Pieces Of Resistance (cassette)
(no label)

Very hometaper release from one Jon Greenbaum, with mid-fi sound, cheesy synths and electronic percussion. The 29 tracks on this tape seldom seem like finished pieces, functioning much like ideas jotted down for later reference. Still, there's enough going on here to make this decent trade bait for other networkers. Most of the tracks are instrumental—though some have talky vocals—with a lot of African-influenced guitar playing ("A Pundit Reflects," "Just Outside Kinshasa"). But you do have the warped political mumble of tracks like "Babylon System" and "The Pathology Of Pacifism" and the collaged voices of "The Corporate Media" and "Read His Lips." Finally Greenbaum gives a nod to the Bulgarian Voices ("Stobblecone Collaboration") and to the ECM sound, as well ("Manfred's Oslo Echo"). Pleasingly eclectic.

SIGILLUM S
Cybertantrick Quantum Leaps (CD)
(Artware Audio)

Dramatic, mostly electronic disc, packaged in an equally striking copper wrapping. "Mother Sow Giving Birth Under A Lab Balcony" is marked by a zap-zap-zap that sounds like bodies hitting an electric fence. Anxious orchestral sounds build, as you make a pulse-pounding, adrenaline-filled escape. "She Loves Drinking Herself" suggests swimming through an alien ocean, brushing past all sorts of unidentifiable debris, while the rhythmic pounding of "Countless Beauty Survivals" gets louder and louder, encroaching upon your personal space. "Tox...By Folding The Spine" combines freaky laughter with plinking piano; "Human Chainsaw" and "Allocation And Paradox" have harsh, bitter vocals reminiscent of Michael Gira; and guitars come into play on

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"Neuroplis," echoing sharply against synths of discontent. Finally, "Mouthwatering God Corporation" moves from an ominous clanking and grossly manipulated vocals into the loud grinding and whirring that culminates the album. *Quantum Leaps* is sure to stimulate the imagination.

60 CYCLE HUM
Intuitive Concepts (cassette)
(Dancing Bear Audio Research)

On this recording from 1987, this duo lives up to its name, as certain passages here are about as exciting as sitting and listening to the whir of the refrigerator. Done in the group's pre-drummer days, this tape presents disembodied guitar feedback with rather absent-sounding scritching and scraping, together with basswork that wanders aimlessly. The A-side, in particular, conjures up nothing but a vague unease, with little in the way of development. The B-side gets a little more jittery, with some twiddling synths and metallic clanging entering the picture, followed by some long, sonorous basslines. At 90 minutes, this tape is about ten times too long.

63 EYES
(7" EP)
(Brick Row)

These West Virginia scenesters turned in the fine *Look In For Mothmen* LP four years ago, but I thought they had long kicked the bucket. Guess not. This trio puts together four songs that you'd be less likely to hear on a 7" nowadays. Years back, it was much more common to hear melodic rock with intelligent lyrics of the Husker Du/Soul Asylum variety, like this. Though they rock out in a way you wouldn't mind hearing if you stepped into their neighborhood bar, there's also a sense of introspection and self-reflection in the words. Also, "Strange Way" reminds me of Codeine-style slow rock, which is good. I'm glad 63 Eyes are back. *—Manny Theiner*

SKIN CHAMBER
Wound (cassette)
(R/C)

One of my favorites this time around. A side project of the Controlled Bleeding folks, this bears no resemblance to the aforementioned. Instead, it's 13 tracks of powerful, hard-hitting grunge, inspired by the likes of early pre-wimp Swans. Occasionally making forays into the speedmetal sound, and sometimes colliding with pure chaotic noise, it doesn't get boring, either. For fans of Godflesh who are tired of the sound-alikes, this one's much more original. Go for it. *—Mason Jones*

SKIN YARD
"Psychoriflepowerhypnotized" b/w "Loser Bar" (7")
(Rave)

No big surprise here. A-side is some pretty sharp burn-and-churn metal/punk on par with "1000 Smiling Knuckles," and while I didn't like the flip at first. I guess it's about as rowdy and grungy as the drinking establishment it describes. If you like Skin Yard, I guess you might as well scoop this one up, too.

SKUNK
Laid (cassette)
(Twin Tone)

This NJ trio illustrates exactly what I would mean if I said, "Ya know, that Twin Tone rock band sound." Hoarse vox scream-singing too many words over hyper-kinetic riff rock. Few decent melodies ever emerge from this, and I know the songs are supposed to be about some unhappy stuff, but that doesn't excuse pure songwriting laziness...—*Lawrence Crane*

SLOPPY JOES
"The Girl With The Light In Her Eyes" b/w "Keep On Truckin'" (7")
(Diesel Only)

A-side is a slice of pure bubblegum, but at 1:43, it needs stronger hooks to make any lasting dent. The flip is a light-hearted rockabilly romp that has a bit more of a punch, but isn't too memorable, either.

SMALL FACTORY
"Suggestions" b/w "Happy To See" & "Not Afraid" (7")
(Collision Time)

It wasn't so long ago when Boston bands made a laughing stock of any Rhode Island group that dared make a peep. But with Velvet Crush and Small Factory, Providence is poised to turn the tables This trio plays pop tunes with light, brisk guitar strumming and tippety-tap drumwork and pure, sunshiney vocal harmonies. "Suggestions" is just ultra-catchy, with an unforgettable hook in its chorus: "It's not so stupid and it's not so dumb..." and the two songs on the flip are pretty darn carefree, too. If I didn't have so many reviews to write, I'd be playing this over and over. *You* have no such excuse.

SMERSH
Love Jones (cassette)
(Atlas King)

This longtime Jersey outfit is branching out, though in ways I'm sure Mason and Manny wouldn't approve. "Don't Forget To Exhale" is old-style distorted vocals and heavy-duty industrial rhythms, but "Advancing South" adds some tonal clanking to the power electronics, as well as some saxophone from guest player Roger Toothman. "Harpy" is a short harsh guitar/vocals song, and "Love Jones" is sparse, with a dub-like echo. My favorites are the housey "Blue Turbulence" and "Total Rap Experience," as Smersh learn to master subtlety and just let it flow. I say hurrah to the band's willingness to expand on a winning (though somewhat tired) formula.

SMOG
Floating (7" EP)
(Drag City)

Short ditties by Lisa Suckdog's Maryland pal Bill Smog. Fits comfortably with Pavement, Sebadoh, and others of that lo-fi ilk. Take your pick between distorted guitar, minimal strumming, or cheesemeister keyboards—it's all produced badly. *—Manny Theiner*

SNAILBOY
"Kept Turd" b/w "Pewie" (7")
(Sympathy For The Record Industry)

Ooch. Snailboy still haven't figured out how to write a real *song*, but they stir up an unhealthy racket trying. Both sides have heaving vocals, crunching tempos, and guitars that blare like elephants trumpeting. For me, there's more odd cartoons and nice bubblegum-pink vinyl.

SNAPDRAGONS
The Snapdragons (CD)
(Atlantic)

These poor, innocent boys from Athens, OH, were somehow stolen away to L.A. to record this stuff for a big, evil record company. Ultra-safe indie-pop, with lite, breezy guitars, super-clean production, fluffy Grateful Dead-style lyrics, and a vague hint of psychedelic pop thrown in. Probably just too tame and uninteresting for most listeners.
—Lawrence Crane

[Yeah, but my co-worker Don got thanked on the back cover...—ed.]

SNATCH THE PEBBLE
"Going Slow" b/w "Peon" (7")
(Esync Ocular)

A bit of a surprise for me, as the previous material I'd heard from this label was of the gloomy, experimental variety. "Going Slow" is rightly named guitar pop, with a nice six-string drone and a foot-tappin' beat. The song is simple and elegant, seeming to glide forward effortlessly. Quite alluring. The flip has a boppy bassline and a rock-steady beat, and singer Ariyah Okamoto whining "I'm not a peon," over and over. Quite annoying.

SNEETCHES
1985-1991 (cassette)
(Alias)

This is a roundup of material that didn't make it on their Alias albums. The first tracks are remixed from *Lights Out!*, other tracks from an EP, compilations, and some outtakes and new tracks. There's covers of the Monochrome Set, Raspberries, and the Easybeats, but the rest are '60s-style pop songs in a Beatles/Hollies vein, which they do excel at doing. For me, though, it's just so predictable and wimpy, it wouldn't matter how good the songs were. *—Lawrence Crane*

SOL INVICTUS
Looking For Europe (7")
(World Serpent)

Here's warning to those who would pay $6 for a 7" that has one side of music, only two minutes long, with a monotonous funk bassline and Tony Wakeford's off-key vocals about the usual vague references to the master race. The other side contains crudely scratched rune patterns, also by Tony. It's not worth it. *—Manny Theiner*

SOLOMON GRUNDY
"Spirit Of Radio" b/w "I'm Not The Freak" (7")
(New Alliance)

This band, of course, is Van from the Screaming Trees' other project (they had an LP out a while back). Here's a Rush cover and an original recorded on 4-track in back of his parents' video store. I don't know what to say of the cover; I hate Rush, and with their treatment of this song, it is hard to tell if it's a tribute or a laugh. "I'm Not The Freak" is good-n-sloppy hard rock/psych, in a vein similar to the Trees. Enjoyable enough—just

don't talk to me about Rush! —*Lawrence Crane*

SOME VELVET SIDEWALK
"Pumpkin Patch" b/w "Apple" & "The Burning World" (7")
(K)

On "Pumpkin Patch," this Oregon trio take punk rock, strip away the excess and distill its emotional intensity into a potent extract. The passion of the vocals is only increased by Al's tendency to wander off pitch, but—as "Apple" illustrates—he can ramble on about bananas and grapes and make it seem like it's the most important thing in the world. The sparse arrangements on "Apple" are complemented by a rinky-dink organ, and it actually works. "The Burning World" adds back the clamor, rounding out this topnotch single.

SOSODADA
Egomatic (cassette)
(no label)

Rather silly collage stuff, as you might guess from the name—circus music, TV commercials, and toy-like synth rhythms. Luckily, this is a rather short tape, but the only piece that really catches my attention is "4 Wm. Blake," with its mystical, orchestral sounds and spoken word clips. Not especially recommended.

SPEED THE PARTING GUEST
Live At The Berkeley Store Gallery (cassette)
(ASP)

With astounding sound for a Walkman recording, this tape features conceptual music, each piece seemingly improvised around a basic idea or construct. Speed The Parting Guest are an ensemble of bass, winds, and drums, and the instruments call out in controlled cacophony, slide about as it on an icy sidewalk, or peer at you tentatively from around the corner. This cassette reminds me of The Official Business project, but with a more classically oriented sound and less of a sense of playfulness. It may be of interest to you intellectuals out there, but it only takes this reviewer so far.

STATE
Control (CD)
(Sound Sound)

We've got a wide variety of styles from Bourbonese Qualk member Stanza, primarily based on percussive/rhythmic bases. Some are slow, some are complex, some even hip-hop, but the rhythm is almost always the basic building block. As was the case with Bourbonese Qualk, there are too many different styles for it to ever get boring, but it also seems as though there's not enough focus on some tracks, which bog down and end abruptly. But in general, it's constantly interesting and worthwhile. —*Mason Jones*

STRAWBERRY ZOTS
Love Operation (CD)
(Continuum)

It's been a career of drastic ups and downs for this New Mexico band. After getting tons of press, they got cut from RCA and find themselves on an indie label. The Zots play frisky pop music, which I admit is hardly my cup of tea, but this disc came with three pieces of their namesake candy, so I figured the least I could do was review it. "Everything's Fun" is pure bubblegum, with bouncy piano; "So I Did" is '60s-ish fare with a touch of violin; and "Reach Of The Darkness" is similar, but with fake harpsichords and a higher campiness quotient. The extended version of "The Girl Who Couldn't Decide," however, is the best of the lot—disco and white soul, with a dash of Deee-Lite flower power. It could be worse...

SUCKDOG/BILL SMOG
"I'm Going To Get Married"+2 b/w "My Shell"+1 (7" EP)
(#1 Hits)

For someone frequently accused of having no talent, Lisa Carver comes up with interesting tidbits with alarming frequency. "Penny Face," for instance, is a gentle tune that reminds me of World Of Pooh's version of "Drusilla Penny." Lisa's voice is soft and unintentionally sexy, and Coz The Shroom comes up with a nifty backwards instrumental accompaniment. Beau Bill Smog's on the other side, with a couple of intriguing tracks. "My Shell" has minor-chord strumming coupled with blown-speaker distortion, and "Astronaut" has muffled zombie-like vocals, a constant humming noise, and thump...thump...thump percussion.

SUGAR BOOM
"Spiral" b/w "Move" (7")
(Schizophonic)
This Portland, OR, band could be the West Coast's answer to Velvet Crush. "Spiral" is charged up pop, with friendly vocals, energetic guitar strumming, and a drummer who really whacks those tubs. "Move," however, drags on a bit, proving that Sugar Boom don't always know when to end a good thing.

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SUGARBURN
"Halfway Train" b/w "Cloudbreath" (7")
(Sonic Bubblegum)

Energetic guitar rock that sounds like Dinosaur Jr. meets the Replacements. A-side's got hot, but melodic guitar leads and the world's quickest drum rolls. B's got a lighter, poppier sound. O.K.

SUPERCOLLIDER
Supercollider (cassette)
(Emigre)

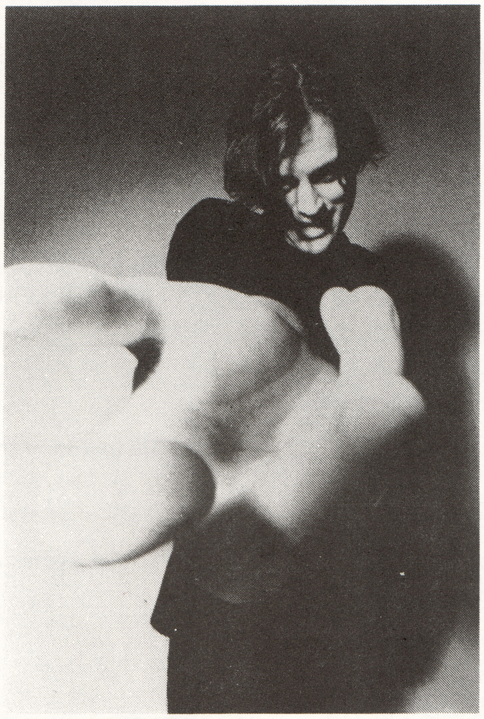
Though guitar, drums, and vocals all play a major role with Supercollider, these eight tunes pay more homage to Reich/Glass minimalism than to rock, blues, punk, or anything else. And I, for one, instantly succumbed to the awkward charm of "Program," with its pulsing guitar repetition, descending keyboard figures, and gently sculpted vocals—as well as the small-scale Branca feel of the band's signature tune, the trance-inducing repetitiveness of "Pedestrian," and the clock-like regularity of "Dimmer." There are no catchy choruses on this tape, and no crashing crescendos, either. Oh so calmly, I turn on the boombox and let out a quiet whoop of enjoyment.

SUPERCHUNK
The Freed Seed (7" EP)
(Merge)

If this EP were by any old band, you'd be talking about it for days—raw, ragged stuff, but with a disarming pop sensibility. When it's Superchunk, you have to get a little more critical and say that this isn't close to their best work. Maybe because it isn't their own work; three of four songs were written by Sebadoh. "I Believe In Fate" goes full tilt, while "It's So Hard To Fall In Love" coasts pleasantly, but none of the songs here really sink into your brain the way you know they should.

SWAMP TERRORISTS
Grow-Speed-Injection (cassette)
(Noise)

This is your basic industrial dance, with propulsive percussion and distorted vocals—with the addition of heavy metal guitars. This Swiss band is less dense and crunching than Godflesh or Treponem Pal, but the beats are more varied (from Kraftwerk-like techno-pop to hip-hop). The quality of the Terrorists' songs is high, but too much of their personality is borrowed from the likes of Front 242 or Ministry.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MATTHEW SWEET

MATTHEW SWEET
Girlfriend (CD)
(Zoo)

I've been listening to Matthew Sweet's "Girlfriend" a lot lately—mostly because it's so damned catchy. It's the kind of stuff that keeps you awake in the middle of the night with the melody and chorus rolling around in your head like one of those crazy gimmick balls that you can never get to roll in a straight line. It's annoying as fuck, but addicting. So what? I wish I'd never heard the song "I've been Waiting," but I'll probably pop it in for the ride home. Shit, it's driving me crazy! I love it. Sweet's the first songwriter to come along in years who can actually write songs. I hate pop music—most of it's total trash. So now comes Sweet who writes pop, loaded with hooks, and yet still gives me something I can sink my teeth into. The song "Divine Intervention" is a brutally honest, yet infuriatingly snappy little number about Sweet's relationship with God. Who cares if it sounds like the Beatles circa 1968? I should hate this shit, but the fact is, it's gotten under my skin, and I feel good. *—Dan Croteau*

SWINEBOLT 45
Spank (cassette)
(Audiofile)

My main problem with guitar-oriented hometaper projects is that they just never rock. Missing is the dynamism of a "real" band. Consequently, I liked the spacier tunes on this tape the best. "July 4th" is dappled with loosely anchored piano, which contrasts with Rolmo's guitarwork, "To Serve You Better" features expansive guitar solos over some nice drum patterns, and "Sleep #3" is a serene, atmospheric nocturne. I don't like everything on *Spank*, but what I do like, I like a lot.

TEAR CEREMONY
Loss And Beatitude (cassette)
(no label)

Brief moments of interest interspersed with long moments where I barely noticed that the tape was on, and other moments of acute distaste. Some people may find much of this album of sparse programmings, wind, and echoes great to zone out to, but I'm not among them. It is kind of peaceful at first, with moments of promise—the quiet hostility of "Incision," and the clever "(I'll Spill) Manhattan." But distorted male vocals grate unpleasantly through "Difference," and though "A Promise Is A Lie" is pretty, vocals return, painfully, on "Monsters And Candyfloss." In the future, Tear Ceremony should restrict voices to samples. *—Richards*

TEN FEET TALL
(7" EP)
(Crankin' 18)

Attention, suburban youth of America: This is Western-PA pop/punk of the All/Big Drill Car variety, with some especially catchy singalong hooks on side one's "Lead" and "Sleepwalk," and lyrics about personal relationships. This is your bag if you like the bands on Epitaph and Lookout. *—Manny Theiner*

THANKS TO GRAVITY
Thanks To Gravity (CD)
(no label)

On the half-dozen tunes, this NH band sounds like a lighter, brighter R.E.M., especially on "Floating Orange Honeymoon," but this band needs some more work tightening things up and writing more memorable songs. "Rain On The Hill" comes closest to success, as Sean Caughran's keyboards are rich rather than cheesy, their long lines contrasting with Graham Smith's acoustic guitar strumming and Sean Daniels' loose, but spritely drumming.

photo: Steve Double

THEE HYPNOTICS

THEE HYPNOTICS
Soul, Glitter & Sin (CD)
(Beggars Banquet)

This CD was a big surprise, as I pretty much hated Thee Hypnotics' last album. But this one has a handful of exceptional tunes that rock just as solidly, but have loads more character. The opener, "Shakedown" is laden with reverbed guitar noise, plus it's got

organs, motorcycle sounds, and brass that sounds like it's from an old spy movie. "Kissed By The Flames" is gloomy stuff, with a resemblance to the Birthday Party's "Jennifer's Veil." And the band is back to their usual dense grunge on "The Big Fix." But "Soul Accelerator" and "Don't Let It Get You Down" go by in a dull, plodding roar, and "Samedi's Cookbook" is tedious and miasmatic. Fortunately, they end off with another winner in "Coast To Coast." This CD is strides ahead of *Come Down Heavy*, but there's still some room for improvement.

THIS PICTURE
A Violent Impression (cassette)
(Dedicated)

Here's a band in a Simple Minds, U2, or Peter Murphy-type vein. "Step Up" and the album's title cut are well-crafted tunes with a melancholy feel and nice guitar, keyboard, and violin textures. "Breathe Deeply Now" is a more upbeat, strum-happy song. Unfortunately, the singer tries to express himself with exaggerated, Neil Diamond-esque gestures. This Picture seem like a talented outfit; it's too bad the delivery makes the songs come across as being rather shallow and bloated.

3D'S

3D'S
Fish Tales/Swarthy Songs For Swabs (CD)
(First Warning)

Originally two EPs on Flying Nun in New Zealand, this is the U.S. release, with two bonus four-track recordings for your listening pleasure. There's former members of Bird Nest Boys, Look Blue Go Purple, and Snapper involved in this, so you know it's bound to be fun. It is. With two male vocalists and one female (fragile and nice), two wonderfully noisy and melodic guitars and an agile rhythm section, all you need are good songs, which the 3D's also have. Rollicking, quirky, fun pop—the kind of music where the players seem to be ecstatic just to be making noise, tapping the same kind of energy a band like the Thinking Fellers seem to have. Goddamn. *—Lawrence Crane*

THREE DAY STUBBLE
Wafer Of Darkness
(no label)

Here's a disc that's sure to try the patience of many. Songs such as "Mind Over Matter," "Who's To Say," and "Teckaknowlegy" have a disoriented feel, getting by on a loping beat, guitars that have a rather tuneless twang, and a singer who has no vocal skills whatsoever. But I found myself enjoying *Wafer Of Darkness*. After the initial aura of incompetence wears off, those who stick with this album will find that the wacky formula actually works. Plus the band keeps things fresh by adding some wailing Asian-sounding vocals on "Aringa Ringa Ringa Ching Ching Ching," a little out-of-whack trumpet on "Foreplay," and some xylophone on "Look Experience." "Pookin' Thru" has an off-kilter Chadbourne/country-like feel, and "Angel Pie" is like putting the Meat Puppets to a Bo Diddley beat. And I haven't even mentioned my favorite tracks, "Be My Friend" and "Wafer O' Darkness." Not only that, but the CD comes with a nice, lo-tech but high-class booklet, too.

THX
Embryon (cassette)
(Alternate Media)

This duo from England, made up of Allan Cleghorn and Mark Berry, creates music they call "space rock/techno dance fusion." It has a smooth, slick feel. I tended to like the more upbeat songs with a housey beat, like "Dream Life" and "The Elixor," and especially "Rain Dance" and "Universal Heresy," which have a spacey feel with a more industrial beat. But "The Other Side Of The Sky," with its starry, dreamy quality was good, too. I like this tape; my only complaint is that I kept hearing the same parts repeated over and over again. Sound quality is excellent. *—Shauna Lo*

ASMUS TIETCHENS
Sinkende Schwimmer (CD)
(Barooni/Soleilmoon)

This guy's works are always carefully assembled, whether they hit you with a barrage of noise or go more after your intellect. *Sinkende Schwimmer* is somewhat austere stuff that falls more into the latter category. Tietchens' forte used to be in computer music and electronics, but "Speeches 1" and "Speeches 2" suggest someone seriously fucking with the innards of a piano, inside a large, reverberating space. "Neue Menschen" and "Herr Und Hund" sound like the manipulations of grunts, sighs, and other vocalizations, "Kein Schoner Traum" bumps around like some electronic pinball game, and "Folienschall" might be the product of some chattering mechanical chipmunks. Good stuff for you thinkers out there.

TRANSYLVANIAN DEATH EXPRESS
All Aboard! (7" EP)
(Funky Sludge)

This CT trio dish out bubblegum pop at punk tempos, with high, quavery vocals, trebly guitars, chunky basswork, and drums that launch into one roll after another, barely under control. But while I like "In The Park" and, to a lesser extent, "Everywhere We Go," it's a case of plenty of speed, not enough power. Red wax.

TREEPEOPLE
Guilt Regret Embarrassment (LP)
(Toxic Shock)

Treepeople's first longplayer comes in a budget-conscious plain black die-cut jacket, and what's inside is pretty stripped down, as well. The dozen songs here are simultaneously melodic and grungy, with great, energetic basswork, drums that are just tight enough,

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and vocals that are barely in key. "No Doubt," "GRE," and "Lost" are my faves, with "No Doubt" having some nice, snaking guitar feedback and "Lost" having a chiming speed pop sound. Very catchy. "Trailer Park" gets more adventurous, as sitars and submerged voices are added to the already tasty brew. Nice guitar licks and velvety bass, too. On the down side, a remake of Bowie's "Andy Warhol" is dry and lifeless, and the band can't seem to keep up the pace over the course of the album. Thus, *Guilt* feels incomplete, but it does suggest a bright future for this Northwestern band.

TREEPEOPLE

TROUBLE WITH LARRY
Songs Of Romance And Intrigue (7" EP)
(Good Kitty)

The Trouble with Larry are starting to open up a bit on four new tunes that have a jarring, early post-punk flavor. The guitars grind away in Joy Div/RLYL-style, and the band's toned down the cutesiness some, too. The drum programming, however, is still awkward, especially on "Happyland," and Richard Sarvay's moribund vocals are still pretty painful to listen to, but "Tangled Up In Red" is the best thing this group's ever done. At least they're making a *little* progress.

ULTERIOR LUX
Live Bootleg From Switzerland (cassette)
(Audiofile)

Members of Lux include Dimthingshine of Florida on drums, Jean Chaine on bass (who recently showed up on a cool recording with David Moss), and Markus Stauss on sax. Downsides are unnecessary Sabbath, Who, and Creedence covers. Upsides are a reading of Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" and some originals ranging from funk to free jazz outings, mostly in that Knitting Factory style. Chaine gets some excellent sounds out of the bass, and the ensemble's playing deserves a good listen. —*Manny Theiner*

UPSIDE DOWN CROSS
Upside Down Cross (CD)
(Taang)

Here's why some people shouldn't be permitted on the CD medium. The Sabbathy, Buttholean, slow, Satan-worshipping sludge on this disc is like the Melvins, but stands rote and forced instead of powerful. The heavy "Battalion Of Rats" almost rises above the putrid program, but not quite. The joke (annoying voice of "Larry Lifeless," the aptly named "Cheez" on bass, "Shoehorn" on guitar, you get the picture) would have been O.K. for a limited-edition, colored-vinyl 7" (see Melvins' "Anal Satan"), but goes on too long, and the presence of a drummer from Dino Jr. can't save it. "I wanna hang from an upside down cross/You don't like it, you can get lost." Get lost, indeed. —*Manny Theiner*

URBAN DANCE SQUAD
Life 'N Perspectives Of A Genuine Crossover (CD)
(Arista)

The band with one of the lamest names in the history of mankind (not to mention band members named, gag, Rudeboy and Magic Stick) comes up with one of the most hideous album titles to hit the bins. And from what I can make out of the lyrics, they're genuinely ridiculous also (and I'll be damned if I'd shell out $1.50 to get 'em in the mail). So why do I like this pseudo-rap Amsterdam crap? Probably because guitarist Tres Manos can dance his way through a variety of styles with relative ease and turntabler D.J.D.N.A. has a knack for dishing out inventive, understated samples. Last year I respected *Swellsville*'s Jack Thompson for picking their debut as one of the ten best of the year, even though I didn't think *Mental Floss* was very good. I may be learning my lesson with *Crossover*. Or, I may be in need of professional help. Probably the latter. Someone call a doctor, the fucker likes Urban Dance Squad. —*Kevin Kraynick*

V-3
Monsters of Hollywood (7" EP)
(Iron Press)

This EP comes in six different hand-painted cover varieties (Frankenstein, Mummy, Dracula, Wolfman, crazy three-faced defect w/fanged punk girl, and dragon eating human) and band leader J. Shepard claims no two are alike. The innards contain two of V-3's best offerings, "Another Exterminator (Eaten By Bugs)" and "Don't Blame Me." The former has a great rock riff that spray-paints the inside of your skull like no tomorrow and the latter is a haunting dirge penned and sung by the sultry Roxanne Newman. The downside to this disc is that both are available on the excellent *Psychic Dance Hall* CD and the bonus third track "Spellbound" isn't a real kick in the pants, but if you want a tidy little taste of what this first-rate band is about *Monsters* is a fine place to begin. (P.S.: If you're into the whole collecting racket I can't think of a better enterprise to fork your dough over to than Iron Press.) —*Kevin Kraynick*

photo: David Sullivan

VANILLA TRAINWRECK

VANILLA TRAINWRECK
Sofa Livin' Dreamazine (CD)
(Mammoth)

This NC band plays your basic post-Dinosaur Jr. indie rock, but the guitar buzz is a bit hazier, and the vocals are a bit lazier. Unfortunately, nothing here grabs you by the jugular the way the "Galvanized" single did. "Wilbur And Orville," "Grapevine," and "Happy" are decent songs, but *Dreamazine* is just a little too murky for any tune to really stand out.

VELVET CRUSH
In The Presence Of Greatness (CD)
(Ringers Lactate)

A pen pal of mine says this disc reminds her of Alex Chilton/Big Star, but since my feeble attempts to like those guys failed, I'll just say that Velvet Crush's first longplayer contains ten slices of pure, melodic pop. VC expand on their Bus Stop beginnings with songs such as "Drive Me Down" and "Ash And Earth," tunes filled with ringing guitar chords, a light '60s distortion, and pretty (but not *too* pretty) vocals. "Blind Faith" shows how this trio can build drama by *taking away* rather than piling it on. Velvet Crush sound like Teenage Fanclub or Superchunk might've turned out had there never been a guy by the name of J.Mascis.

VERMONSTER
Instinctively Inhuman (LP)
(Twisted Village)

This album is just plagued by the sludgy, indistinct guitars that mask any features the music or playing might have; Dave Lynch's drumming is all but buried. And certainly, Vermonster don't knock you off your seat on vinyl the way they do live. "Stoned Guitar" (20:38 in length) simmers a little, but "Black Sally" (16:29) is well nigh unlistenable. The dull, annoying roar sounds like high-school kids pretending they're F/i. And with this

second LP, Kevin doesn't even get a cover shot of Rebecca Odes to lust over.

VERTEBRAE
"My New Home" b/w "One Cigarette" (7")
(ERL)

Second single of their fairly basic noisy, heavy rock that could have come from anywhere. I can understand if it gets lost in the shuffle, because it's unremarkable. "One Cigarette" is better than the A-side; it reminded me of Couch Flambeau for a few seconds. *—Manny Theiner*

VERTIGO
Rub (7" EP)
(Amphetamine Reptile)

While I'm as sick of the whole Crime revival as I hope everybody else is, "Murder By Guitar" is handled so ferociously within the heavy-handed grasp of the majestic Vertigo that I can let a little more Crime worship slide by. On top of it, "Rub" and "Smoked" are so fat and juicy that if you tie a napkin around my neck I'll fly at the bastard face first. *—Kevin Kraynick*

WAG
Multiple Cartoon Dogs (cassette)
(Happy Tails)

Nine songs from this Evanston band, R.E.M.-like, with jangly guitars and above-average vocals. "GC" is nifty, airy pop, with some peppy drumming by Joshua Weiner, "Life In 2 Minutes" pours it on so fast, it's over in 1:31, and "Clarence" is reprised from the band's 7" EP. Otherwise, *Cartoon Dogs* is pleasant, but nothing here comes close to the sparkle of "Epicurean Dream."

WALLMEN
"International House Of Juju" b/w "Touchax" (7")
(Dead Judy)

Oddball stuff on this rare vinyl appearance by the Wallmen, though these two tunes rock about as straight ahead as these guys ever do. Both sides here are nice revampings of tunes from the guys' rather sub-par last tape, *Last Of The Broken Mexicans*, "Juju" with goofy lyrics and loopy guitarwork, and "Touchax" with cheery babble and wack-a-doo six string. Fun, jumpy, quirky, and all that jazz. Yellow wax.

WENDEL DOESN'T MIND
"New Life" b/w "We Are Lost" (7")
(no label)

I'm not often at a total loss for words, as I am with this single—and I knew pretty much what to expect from this guitar/bass duo. On "New Life," Chris Young bellows out his vocals using a very small range of notes, while Darren Orchid lays down some noisy, tuneless guitar strumming. And the whole thing has a thick-as-molasses sound. "We Are Lost" is gentler and almost melodic. If you buy this, let me know what you think, will ya?

photo: Stefan DeBatselier

THE WENDYS

WENDYS
Gobbledygook (cassette)
(EastWest)

I'd like to know what the majority of the people who write these foolish, gushing bios are thinking. Here's a suggestion: Tell me what they've done, what they're doing, and what's in the works; throw in a few interesting quotes from the bandmembers, and be done with it. Write *a bit* about the music, but leave the fucking thesaurus on the shelf. "Serpentine grooves," "beguiling visions," "vortexes of seething emotion"—look, you're embarrassing yourselves and your band. That said, *Gobbledygook* has some fine moments. The first couple of songs are decent pop, but I found myself thinking fearfully of the Charlatans U.K. With the weak "Half Blind," complete with a miserable chorus ("I'm half bli-yi-yi-yi-yind..."), I was pretty worried. Fortunately, the Wendys discover an edge for most of the rest of the album, and "Removal," "I Want You and I Want Your Friend," and "Soon Is Fine" are energetic and terrific, reminding me vaguely of some of the harsher Church songs. Lyrics from this Scottish foursome are consistently clever and amusing, and just so you'll be sure to take note, the press information mentions it several times. Please, stop. *—Richards*

[Ya know, the nice thing about bios is, you don't really have to read 'em if you don't wanna. —ed.]

WITH AUTHORITY
"System Screwed" & "Change" b/w "An Act Of Violence" (7")
(Rusty Cow)

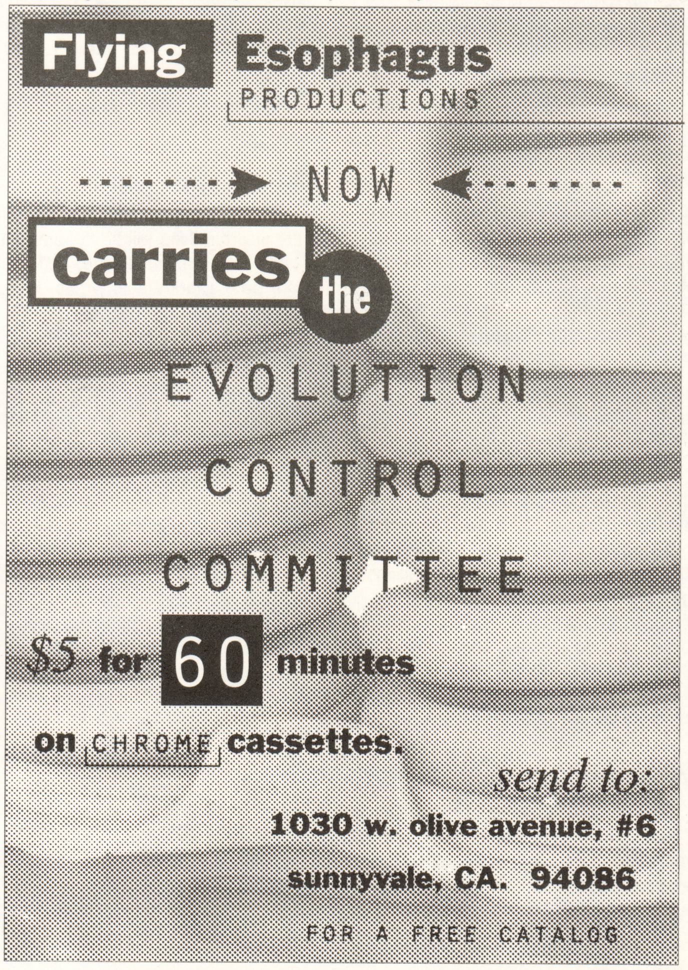
Earnest HC stuff that's really no better or no worse than anything you've heard before. The most notable feature of the band being Robert Bimber's drumming, though he's not always in line with the rest of the band. A-side has a couple of shorter tunes, while the band draws the flip out to four minutes—and it seems to work, as the heavier riffing sticks to my ribs a little better. The bands says this is the direction they'll be pursuing in the future, and judging from this 7", it's a good thing. Blue wax.

WONDERAMA
"Padre Pio (The Stigmatist)" b/w "Out Of Focus" (7")
(Ajax)

Yet another band employing the services of bassist Dave Rick (King Missile, Bongwater). Here are two rock meanderings featuring Chuck Marcus doing bluesy note-bends on "Padre Pio," in the tradition of NYC noodly noisy guitar, while Mark Alhadeff provides spastic vocals. "Out Of Focus" gets rather wacked-out and trippy, with its '70s arena-rock feel. *—Manny Theiner*

WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET AND AFRICAN DRUMS
Metamorphosis
(Elektra/Nonesuch)

Considering that David Murray is currently one of my favorite musicians in the world, I



was delighted to see this new offering teaming Murray, Oliver Lake, Arthur Blythe, and Hamiet Bluiett with three African percussionists of unknown origin. (Unknown in that I don't know who in the hell they are). The four seem to be holding back a bit to accommodate their guests, which is right neighborly of them, so as a result *Metamorphosis* isn't as skull-whacking as a lot of the more "primal" (and superior) stuff in the WSQ discography, but it still rings my tub true and clear. While the worldbeat approach skins light on the second track, "Lullaby," which was written by one of the drummers, it picks up a considerable amount of steam when the same gentleman hooks pens with Murray on "Su Mama Ah Zumu." *Metamorphosis*' version of "Ballad For The Black Man" isn't anywhere near as—and I mean this literally—moving as the rendition I saw Murray lay down at Lincoln Center this summer, but it's still a pleasure to hear it. All in all this is scrambled enough for my tastes, but it may be over easy to you. (Suggestion for next collaboration: king drummer Milford Graves) *—Kevin Kraynick*

YOUR BRAIN ON DRUGS
Oil? (cassette)
(Sound Of Pig)

Mixed bag on this solo tape from Pete Harrigan. Quite excellent are "Energy Is Power," with cyclic synth pulses and layers and layers of cascading feedback, and "Burn Hemp Not Oil," a spacey whine/drone piece. O.K. is "March To The Beat (Of A Madman)" with twisted synths, garbled voices, and George Bush clips. Reminiscent of Harrigan's work with 60 Cycle Hum, "Burning Ground" is less tolerable, with Pete tooling aimlessly up and down the scale on his bass, over a clunky programmed beat.

ZEN GUERRILLA
"Get It" b/w "Daddy Long Legs" (7")
(Insect)

"Get It" is a chaotic, indecipherable funk monster with vocals so echoed-out as to be unintelligible, skittering, odd synths, and brittle guitars setting one on edge. Side two is slow, grungy rock with an incredibly noise-filled, huge ending. This band seems capable of many things; it's fun and full of great ideas. I would buy an album if I saw one, just to see what else they could conjure up. Really. *—Lawrence Crane*

ZENI GEVA
"Honowoh/Sweetheart" b/w "Bloodsex" (7")
(Baby Huey)

This 7" presents an excellent opportunity for those not familiar with this Japanese outfit to get involved. the three songs here beat you senseless with slow...heavy...crunching blows on twin guitars and drums, while Null bellows out the same phrase over and over and over in a most brainwashing manner. Who needs death metal when you've got Zeni Geva?

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Cybernetik Renaissance Compilation (cassette)
(Infekted)

A fairly consistent collection of artists, primarily focusing on the ambient side of experimental music. I've been feeling lately that the next big thing will be the ambient field being mined by folks like Zoviet France and Nocturnal Emissions, and this compilation supports that. Good work overall from Dave Clark/Walter Drake, PBK, Illusion Of Safety, Industyal Man, Nux Vomica, Naram Sin, Mike Hovancsek, K.O.M.A., and Big Orchestra. *[Maybe Big City Orchestra? —ed.]* I felt it might have gone on a bit long, but ambience sometimes hits me that way. *—Mason Jones*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Eye Decay Theory (LP)
(Johnny Blue)

This comp features a dozen subtle tracks, segued together with what seems to be unrelated narrative. But it works remarkably well, as the pieces lead one into the other with your scarcely realizing it. Best cuts include PGR's "Requiem" (rich, ominous atmospheres and ghostly clatter), Luciano Dari's "Lapide Minerale IV" (dark-hued drone, with alien creatures nibbling away at the edges), Helene Sage and Bernard Vitet's "Le Dictionnaire Des Synonymes" (a multilingual lesson with overlapping male and female voices), and Bourbonese Qualk's "Halabja" (sparse, Orb-like electronics with an enticing beat). Also included are the braying violins of UNACD and the dirge-like sounds of Vrischika, and more misty ambience from Peter Frohmader. An excellent debut release from this Portuguese label.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Ghost Of A Rollercoaster (7" EP)
(Shrimper)

First vinyl release from this previously tape-only label, showcasing (believe it or not) nine bands on a single 7". Unfortunately, cuts by the likes of Halo, Satnam Puppets, and Jim Bishop are just short bits of filler—here and gone in the blink of an eye. But there are a few distinctly lo-fi winners here: the punk attack of Shoeface's "I Hate The Government," Franklin Bruno's tender guitar/vocal tune "Lifeless Seance," and the pop jangle of Wckr Spgt's "Fluffy Cat." If you've been waiting for wax before checking out the Shrimper way of life, go out and buy this. Otherwise, go with the *Capgun* comp to get more bang for the buck.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Gnomean Haigaimean (LP)
(Johnny Blue)

Having a lineup of well-known underground artists can't save this rather tepid collection whose theme seems to be vague, dreamlike imagery over lite percussion. The Cranioclast piece throws some voices on top of a rather feeble instrumental backdrop, the Vox Populi cut goes for a pseudo-primitive approach, and Osso Exotico's contribution is a needless 43-second sound collage. Vaguely frightening scenes are painted by Brume, Etant Donnes, and P16.D4, Un Drame Musical Instantane's piece lays "deranged" vocals over scraping violins, and Godfried-Willem Raes' "Murphy" is nothing more than a thump and a baby's cry sped up faster and faster. Only Le Syndicat's destroyed music and Contrastate's subtle space sounds do anything for me at all. A total disappointment after the admirable *Eye Decay Theory* compilation.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Hypertronics (cassette)
(Hypertonia)

A primarily successful tape of 16 short, mostly electronic works which seem to share an introspective disposition and a gently rhythmic feel. The tracks that stand out the most in my mind include those by Le Mot And Kino (Gang Of Four guitar, motor-like noises over a light percussive undercurrent), W.F. MacKenzie (restful, percolating rhythms, and chiming synth peals), Micael Briel (slightly heavier rhythms with a Euro-pop feel and female moans), Anton Balsam (contrapuntal piece with melancholy piano, mallet instruments, and pipe organ parts), and Idee Du Femelle (Jon Hassell-like mystical African flavor). And best of all are two excerpts from Andreas Bick's "Clock Paradise," a long, flowing collage with marimba sounds, train noises, cans being kicked down the sidewalk, and Windham Hill/ECM-like guitars and bass. Less rewarding are a klunky keyboard and guitar duet by Dino Don and Konrad Kraft and a minimalist piece-meets-Bach Invention from Jeremy Clarke. Few tracks here knock my socks off, but *Hypertronics* is a decent introduction to an assortment of underground artists from around the globe.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
I Hear The Devil Calling Me (7" EP)
(Drag City)

A dozen minute-long tunes cast fleeting images, like you life flashing before your eyes. All 12 are vaguely disturbing, from the quiet intensity of the deviant folk tunes by Alstair Galbraith and David Mitchell to the droney rock and wailing vocals of Cyclops and Queen Meanie Puss. Other tracks feature dentist-drill violin and spoken word (A Handful Of Dust); wan piano tracings (Peter Jefferies); sickly vocals and slide guitar (The Renderers); sparse, warped stuff that fades into hip hop (Gate); and feverish whisperings (Dadamah). Licensed from New Zealand's Xpressway Records, this 7" packs in more substance than most longplayers do.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
If I Could Hear You I Would Hit You (7" EP)
(Baby Huey)

I liked Nothing Painted Blue's "Go To Waste" so much, I invented a new dance: 1) stiffen arms and legs like a scarecrow, holding limbs at funny angles, 2) look up at ceiling with tongue hanging out, while jerking around spasmodically, 3) switch arm and leg positions, look down at ground, keep spazzing, 4) do it again. WARNING: This is difficult to do while wearing headphones. But besides NPB's frenetic goofball pop, you've got Shoeface's thick, mucous-laden approach to melodic rock, the Primordial Underground's energetic "Swimming The Ultramaroon," and primitive, clanking K rock with weasel-like vocals in the Bux's "Chicken Wire Teeth." Fun city.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Illuminations (cassette)
(Axiom)

A wonderful comp that recalls the heyday of Celluloid Records, *Illuminations* unites music from the whole world with a common thread—the production of Bill Laswell. On the cross-cultural tip, supergroup Material (including Sly & Robbie, Bootsy Collins, and Bernie Worrell on this tune) dish out a little Afro-house on "Cosmic Slop"; bassist extraordinaire Jonas Hellborg gives a Middle Eastern flavor to"Saut-E Sarmad," an outing with the Soldier String Quartet; and Ginger Baker continues in his African-infuenced mode on "Under Black Skies," a composition with three bass players (Laswell, Jonas Hellborg, and Jah Wobble). Then you've got traditional Gnawa, Fulani, and Mandinka music; a couple of modern-day ragas from Shankar; and even some loose, flowing jazz

from Sonny Sharrock on "As We Used To Sing," featuring Elvin Jones and Pharaoh Sanders. A tasty mix I'd recommend to just about anybody.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
I'm Your Fan—Songs Of Leonard Cohen
(Atlantic)

I looked forward to this disc, and it didn't let me down. Racking my brain for something negative to say only produces the mild complaint that a few of the songs are a bit too subdued for my taste—but then, Cohen's lyrics of love and lament are so strong it really doesn't matter. Nick Cave's rocking version of "Tower Of Song" is one highlight, but just as enjoyable are John Cale's gripping "Hallelujah," That Petrol Emotion's lovely "Stories Of The Street," and David McComb and Adam Peter's powerful "Don't Go Home With Your Hard-On." It's hard to believe that "I Can't Forget" wasn't originally a Pixies song after hearing their passionate cover. R.E.M.'s "First We Take Manhattan" is probably getting all the airplay, but it, like "Everybody Knows" (mercifully excluded from this tribute), is probably incapable of being covered satisfactorily. If you heard Concrete Blonde butcher the latter two years ago, you know what I mean. *I'm Your Fan*, though, is more than just a great tribute album—it's a damn nice disc to have on the shelf. *—Richards*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Japan Bashing 3 (2x7")
(Public Bath)

Proof that no one, repeat no one, gets as extreme as the Japanese. Hijo Kaidan's "Theme Of The Taste Of The Wild West" sounds like the hell experienced by a woman perpetually about to be mashed beneath a screeching subway car, Solmania's "Highdrophobia Part 2" sounds like a chainsaw-wielding bigfoot getting sucked into a raging inferno, Hanatarash's "Galaxy Boost" is a windup clown tottering through a ghoulish nightmare, and Masonna's "Hot Licks From A Cunning Linguist" is every grotesque emotion compressed into a series of inarticulate screams and moans. Total noise freakout for those who can take it.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Jazzspeak (CD)
(New Alliance)

Harvey Kubernik put together this collection of (mostly) spoken word pieces of and about jazz. The 30 tracks on this disc are filled with joy, memories, tirades, tributes, pain, and love—all dealing with jazz as music, lifestyle, thought, and more. If you're into spoken word, this is topnotch, and if you're into jazz, the same holds true. There's more fuckin' history and culture in this CD than in the four years I wasted in college. *—Lawrence Crane*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Lump Of Coal (CD)
(First Warning)

Rarely is an album so appropriately named; if this doesn't put you in a grim mood at Christmastime, nothing will. Take 11 bands who can be pretty grim on their own—including the Wedding Present, Hoodoo Gurus, and the Primitives—toss them onto one compilation, and then ask them each to perform a traditional Christmas song. Taken one song at a time, the disc is sort of fun. The Crash Test Dummies do a rich "First Noel," and the Primitives put in an admirable showing with "Silent Night." I never realized what an evil song "Twas The Night Before Christmas" was when I performed it at the Speaking Pageant in third grade, but of course I hadn't heard Henry Rollins bark it out, complete with spooky, swirling winds and angry sirens. Really, I can't think of a better disc to slip on the carousel player between *John Denver And The Muppets* and *A Very Special Christmas*. *—Richards*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Manifestation (CD)
(Anomie)

This document of the Houston underground (and the first in a series) is about as D.I.Y. as a CD can get, with a Xerox-quality cover and uneven sound quality. Musically, it's also somewhat of a mixed bag, though parts are quite excellent. Pain Teens kick things off in fine style with three tunes, including the ominous, disembodied "Daughter Of Chaos"; Trailor Trash let loose with six raw punk tunes reminiscent of X, with their stripped-down approach and male/female vocals; and Jesus Penis contribute two tracks, featuring "God Has Everything Under Control," a work that combines ultra-electrothrob with fire-and-brimstone preaching. But then things begin to go awry with four disjointed Pleasure Center tracks. Turmoil In The Toybox create most horrifying scenes—particularly when listening with headphones—on their two tracks, especially "Irene," with its graphic description of a sex-change operation, featuring grisly sound effects. Sometimes I like it; sometimes it turns my stomach. Sacred Cows bring things back into the rock world, "Church Of Satan" being a catchy little number; Gut Logic sound like Foetus playing Gothic monster music; and Fortunes Of Vice crank out a single noisy improv track. So, not everything comes up roses here, but when was the last Boston comp that came anywhere close to this?

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Noise From Nowhere Vol. 6 (7")
(Toxic Shock)

Just two songs this time 'round. House Of Large Sizes have shown some real moments of brilliance in their career, but "Bankrupt In Hoven" is a rather lackluster tune that sounds like a poor copy of later-period Led Zep. The flip is a surprise, though. In "Neil's Down," Treepeople, originally from Boise, crank out a lo-fi roar that sounds a lot like early, untamed Dinosaur Jr. Pretty hot.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Pointless Compilation (cassette)
(Pointless)

The amazing thing about this comp of hometapers is how works by a diverse assortment of artists is sequenced to flow so smoothly. The flip side is that—since the individual contributors are treated as pieces of a larger whole—when the tape ends, you have little sense of what's what and who's who. Side one runs from the grinding slog rock of Dimthingshine and Sick April, through the cerebral, more acoustic Illusion Of Safety and the sound-bite collage of Cudahy/Milstein/Cox, to the noodling and crackling constructions of Prose In Cannes. In other words, you wind up so far from home, you don't know how you'll ever get back. Far superior, actually, is the second side of the tape, as the guitar warpage of Fuzzhead's take on Bowie's "Golden Years" eases into the solo guitar manipulations of Mike Hovancsek, and then into the textural whines and random plunkings of Michael J. Schumacher and Charles Curtis.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Rock City Sampler #4 (cassette)
(Rock City)

Poor sound quality hampers this compilation of unknown bands from Rock City. And the tape also gets off to a rather weak start, with three lackluster hard rock cuts, including Ultraism's plodding, clanking "High Point," with its awful, whining vocals. But things improve from there, with the proto-punk of Shrinkwrap and Sex Kitchen, a Sisters Of Mercy-like track from David E. Williams, some HC/thrash from Dumpt and Vacant Groove, and the death metal of Vile Remains. Side two is pretty much all metal, and a rather hit or miss affair. Pluses are the rockin' tunes by Only Living Witness, DNC, and Physco Path (the latter with some nice guitar licks, despite its overly long length). Minuses include the wailing, Iron Maiden-like songs by Axemaster and Ded Elect. Rock

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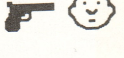

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If I Could Hear You I Would Hit You
7" Compilation w/Nothing Painted Blue, Primordial Undermind, The Bux and Shoeface

City Samplers are a lot like amateur contests—some acts are pretty good, others deserve the hook. But in the end, it's still just an amateur contest.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Show-Kai (magazine/2 cassettes)
(Public Bath)

This is either two 90-minute tapes with a magazine, or a magazine with a couple of tapes, depending on your emphasis. The magazine has interviews, reviews, comics, stories, and much more, with folks like Omoide Hatoba, Boredoms, Folk Tales, and so on. The two cassettes have unreleased or live tracks by Omoide Hatoba, Folk Tales, Diahakase, Dub Squad, Soap-jo Henshi, and the Goonzees. Basically, if you're into the Japanese independent music scene, you can't live without owning this. If you're intrigued by it but don't know much, you can't live without this. You get the picture. —*Mason Jones*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Where It's At '91 (cassette)
(Audiofile)

What a pleasant surprise. Evidently these cassettes have been being produced for some time now (this is number 130), but so have rice cakes and I've never tried one. Consequently I've never heard of any of these 16 groups, but since familiarity breeds contempt, it probably worked in the compilation's favor. I can certainly support this "indie-pain-dance" wholeheartedly when each track gives it a different group's perspective. It's particularly effective when it ventures into black humor (Arnold Mathes' "State of Chaos") or the ethereal plane (Through Black Holes Band's "The Psychedelic E"). The Droonies' "A Scary Hole," one of the few cuts with vocals, is wickedly vibrant, as is Krel's many-textured "Moribus." The worst I can say about several of the tracks is that they're too damn long. All in all, a great tape to play for your next party where the gentlemen and the ladies prefer black. —*Richards*

EDITORIAL, continued from page 3

that I've decided to try to limit the number of reviews printed each issue to about 250. Any more than that means additional printing costs for a section that's getting so large, I bet nobody out there reads the whole thing. Hence, it's going to be a little harder to get something reviewed. By my estimation, for this issue, about a third of the major label stuff we got was reviewed, maybe two-thirds of the material sent by larger indies got written up, while almost everything sent by smaller labels and individual artists got reviewed. It's only going to get tougher from here on out, but I will do my best to make sure that every release gets listened to at least once. Fair enough?

So, on to the good stuff...In this here issue, we start off with Chris Bodor's interview with John Haggerty of Pegboy. Haggerty comments on his years in Naked Raygun and expresses surprise at how well received his new band has been after only one full-length album. Loren Rhoads writes on her experience accompanying a friend to get a rather personal part of her body pierced. "Christine's First Piercing" is delicate and delicious, rather than voyeuristic or sensationalistic—and is perhaps the single **File 13** item I'm most proud of since way back in #7. Next, we've got an interview with Massive Attack, done on the contemplative dance act's recent tour of the States, and Mason Jones talks with Blackhumour, a performance artist who manipulates our sense of time rather than our sense of aesthetics. And in a special guest opinion, Debbie Jaffe ponders why there aren't more women in the underground/experimental music scene.

In our regular columns, DJ Robsquad gives us his choices for the top rap records of 1991, Steve Davis gives us a resident's view of the charms of Osaka, and Mason shares his experiences of a brief trip to Amsterdam. And of course, we've got the dance, live, and 'zine reviews, and munch, munch more. Plus, Kevin Kraynick joins us as staff reviewer, for at least this issue. You probably know Kev from the now-expired *Damp*, the rock fanzine that refused to rock, but was way cool anyway.

Finally, special thanks are due to Dan Croteau, who probably should have received more credit for his pre-press help over the past two years, but I didn't want to get him fired, y'know? And Dan, David, and Wendy deserve a round of applause for their (somewhat leisurely) help with the official **File 13** T-shirts, which should finally be available by the time you read this—$12 ppd. in the U.S., checks payable to Mark Lo, and please specify size (M, L, XL). Dan says I've got to get this merchandising thing down. "Just look at Lisa Suckdog," he says...

'ZINES, continued from page 5

his car: "I would probably enjoy it. When life gives you a lemon...make lemon aid [sic]. Women don't seem to feel this way about rape. They have to worry about getting pregnant. But they could carry a diaphragm or rubbers or stay home those three or four days they are fertile. They allow the 'rape fear' to limit where they can go and what they can do." Hopefully, I need not comment further on this. (stamps, P.O. Box 24, Cushing, MN 56443)

***Look Again* #4**—Impressive 'zine with a down-to-basics feel, keeping firmly on the metal tip, with occasional glances toward the HC side of the punk spectrum. Ints in #4 include Megadeth, Type O Negative, and Headfirst. Then there's a buttload of reviews, above-average graphics and layout, and a refreshing lack of "attitude." In fact, *Look Ahead* inspired me to take a few minutes and jot down the **File 13** metal top ten of 1991 (NH 'zines rule, O.K.?):

Brutal Truth, *Birth Of Ignorance* (demo)
Cyclone Temple, *I Hate Therefore I Am* (Combat)
Fudge Tunnel, *Hate Songs In E Minor* (Relativity)
Leeway, *Desperate Measures* (Profile)
Massacre, *From Beyond* (Earache)
Mordred, *In This Life* (Noise)
Seka, *Love Shim* (Taang)
Sepultura, *Arise* (R/C)
Treponem Pal, *Aggravation* (Roadracer)
Type O Negative, *Slow, Deep, And Hard* (Roadracer)

($2, P.O. Box 1090, Hudson, NH 03051)

Pages From The Threatbox—This is Chase's manual of tips for the practicing "torture-tech" band, that plays what most people call "industrial dance." I don't know if you'll buy all of his suggestions, but he offers sensible pointers on set lengths, avoiding overused samples and gimmicks, writing bios, and so forth. Also included is a listing of 'zines that cater to this sort of music. (stamps?, Chase, 4545 Contour Blvd. #C, San Diego, CA 92115)

***Softwatch* #1**—The intent of this little booklet is to share information and addresses of labels, publications, and artists involved in electronic, industrial, and experimental music. The more detailed write-ups in the debut issue include mostly U.K. activity: the 'zine *Dreams From Within*, Mute Records subsidiary Grey Area, and tape label Mindscan, for instance. (IRCs?, A.G. Burnham, 70 Old Hinckley Rd., Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV10 0AB, U.K.)

***Total* #1**—Just a knockout of a debut, well researched and well written. *Total* is 60 pages of fascinating reading, as the Scotland-based mag gets into the cracks and corners of *American* society and culture. For starters, there's an in-depth look at phone phreaking, illustrating how extensive and methodical stealing phone service has become. "Inside The Gemstone File" reveals some startling theories on the JFK assassination, "The Necessity Of Deviance" examines the trend of mass murderer as folk hero, "The Plight Of The North American Indians" reprints an 1855 latter from Chief Seathl to the U.S. government, and "From Orgasm To Ufo's" concerns scientist Wilhelm Reich's research into "deadly orgone radiation" from nuclear testing and UFOs. Also profiled are current efforts of the KKK, as well as the work of the Society For The Eradication Of Television. And several articles examine brainwashing in society, from Muzak (reproducing an actual company brochure) to the Unification Church (telling the stories of two young women who escaped the Moonies). And that's not even mentioning the excellent visuals—or the CD, which features the likes of Frontline Assembly, Bourbonese Qualk, Flux, and the Anti-Group. (price?, c/o Soleilmoon, P.O. Box 83296, Portland, OR 97283)

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